

Peacebuilding

# *Diasporas as partners in conflict resolution and peacebuilding*

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# *Diasporas as partners in conflict resolution and peacebuilding*

Policy recommendations for fruitful collaboration based on fieldwork studies in Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway

Diasporas for Peace: Patterns, Trends and Potential of Long-distance Diaspora Involvement in Conflict Settings. Case Studies from the Horn of Africa (DIASPEACE) is a three-year research project looking into how diaspora groups can foster peace and development in their countries of origin.

DIASPEACE seeks to generate policy-relevant, evidence-based knowledge on how exiled populations from conflict regions play into the dynamics of peace and conflict in their countries of origin. In a globalised world such diaspora have become new forces shaping the interactions between countries, regions and continents. In the mainstream literature, diaspora are often seen to fuel conflict and exacerbate tensions through radical mobilisation along ethnic and religious lines. New research findings, however, show that diaspora groups are playing an increasingly prominent role in peace and reconciliation processes. In DIASPEACE the focus is on positive initiatives, while keeping in mind also the non-intended and negative impacts.

The project has an empirical focus on diaspora networks operating in Europe, which extend their transnational activities to the Horn of Africa. This is a region where decades of violent conflict have resulted in state collapse and the dispersal of more than two million people. The project involves six partners from Europe and two from the Horn of Africa and is based on field research conducted in both Europe and Africa.

DIASPEACE aims to: a) devise and test methodologies of multi-sited comparative research and to develop the conceptual framework for researching migrant political transnationalism in a conflict context; b) facilitate interaction between diaspora and other stakeholders in the Europe and in the Horn of Africa; c) provide policy input on how to better involve diaspora in conflict resolution and peacebuilding interventions, and how to improve coherence between security, development and immigration policies.

DIASPEACE consists of five main research components:

- Defining joint analytical tools and research methodologies;
- Providing a comparative assessment of transnational diaspora networks from the Horn of Africa and their interfaces with European civil society and state institutions;
- Case studies of diaspora as agents of conflict and peace from the Horn of Africa;
- Interaction between European institutions and diasporas in conflict resolution and peace building;
- Synthesis and dissemination of the research findings and identification of further research directions.

The project aims to generate new knowledge to better understand diaspora's potentials, expectations and experiences as bridge builders between countries of residence and countries of origin.

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## **About ADPC**

The African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) is an independent policy research centre devoted to the study of migration and development-related issues from the under-documented perspective of the diaspora. It generates knowledge and information primarily targeted at three groups: African diaspora organisations in Europe, development practitioners and policy-makers dealing with diaspora-related issues both in Africa and Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has been co-written by a team of researchers involved in the DIASPEACE project, under the coordination of the ADPC. Besides the editor, all other authors have been listed in alphabetical order. The various sections, however, are attributed as follows: Introduction, sections 1, 3 and 4 have been written by Giulia Sinatti with comments and input from all contributors. Under section 2, the case of Italy is authored by Matteo Guglielmo, Petra Mezzetti and Valeria Saggiomo, Germany by Andrea Warnecke, the Netherlands by Giulia Sinatti, Norway by Rojan Ezzati and Cindy Horst, and Finland by Päivi Pirkkalainen

This paper explores the topic of collaboration between diasporas and governmental and non-governmental actors in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction initiatives. Its purpose is to identify key policy recommendations for external parties wishing to establish working relationships with diasporas specifically in these fields. The paper therefore mainly targets an audience of policy makers, however the considerations in the pages that follow will be of interest also to other practitioners in the development field as well as to diaspora groups themselves. The paper is based on data collected within the DIASPEACE research project, analysing how external actors<sup>2</sup> and diaspora groups<sup>3</sup> interact in peacebuilding initiatives. The results discussed in this paper derive from data collected in five European countries (Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Finland) and focus on the specific case-study of diasporas originating from the Horn of Africa.<sup>4</sup>

In the following section, a brief overview is provided of the debate on diaspora engagement with a specific focus on the implications in the field of peacebuilding. Section 2 is dedicated to the presentation of the different national case studies covered by the research, providing a summary of the main actors and measures in place in each country that provide room for diasporas to collaborate with other actors in peace and post-conflict reconstruction. In an attempt to assess existing efforts to engage diasporas in peacebuilding-relevant initiatives, this section takes into account the existence of specific policies linking migration with development, it reviews available funding opportunities accessible to the diaspora and it examines efforts to empower diaspora organisations. Drawing on a cross-country comparison, section 3 provides a more detailed discussion of some of the achievements and challenges faced when collaborating with diasporas in peacebuilding. The general migration-development environment enacted in the different countries emerges as playing a strong enabling role for diasporas to engage effectively as peacebuilding partners. Research findings, however, indicate that a number of other areas are also key. In particular, dealing with fragmented *versus* unitary diaspora interlocutors, defining the specific form of mutual collaboration and understanding the effective value added of working with diasporas are all factors able to influence the peacebuilding impact of collaborative actions. These considerations are sustained and later resumed in a concluding section, in which four main policy recommendations are put forward for fruitful collaboration between diasporas and external parties in peacebuilding.

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<sup>2</sup> Including international, inter-governmental, national and sub-national institutions, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and smaller civil society organisations (CSOs).

<sup>3</sup> Voluntary as well as professional organisations and individuals. In the case of organisations exhibiting a mixed membership (diaspora and autochthonous), the organisation was considered to be 'diaspora' when the majority of board members is of diaspora background. For a broader definition of the concept of diaspora adopted within the DIASPEACE project see Pirkkalainen and Abdile (2009).

<sup>4</sup> Case studies from the Eritrean, Ethiopian and Somali diaspora were covered, however not all these groups were selected for study in each country. For further details see the following section and, in particular, footnote 11.

# 1. Diasporas as peacebuilding partners

Migrants are increasingly regarded as promoters of development in their countries of origin. The migration-development debate, in fact, has rapidly evolved into an issue that cuts across the fields of research, policy and practice. Migrants show a strong commitment towards their countries of origin that translates into substantial transfers of financial, as well as social, cultural and human capital. In addition, diasporas are proven to organise themselves in their countries of residence in order to actively engage in community initiatives and development-oriented interventions.

Migrants are thus believed to bring valuable contributions towards homeland development in an increasing number of spheres. Among these, recent research has highlighted that diasporas can play a significant role also in processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction in countries affected by conflict. Before venturing further into this discussion, there is a need first for a terminological clarification. The DIASPEACE project adopts a broad understanding of the term ‘peacebuilding’, which is inclusive of different kinds of development activities that are undertaken with a long-term commitment to create stability through the sustainable transformation of structural conflict in all relevant social, economic and political spheres.<sup>5</sup> Diasporas can contribute in various ways to peacebuilding, responding to the need «to create [in their countries of origin] structures and mechanisms to ensure not only compliance with the terms of an [peace] agreement but a radical rebuilding of a more peaceful structure» that will prevent the conflict from recurring (Bercovitch 2007: 34). In the past, literature mostly highlighted the negative effects of diasporas’ influence on conflict settings. Authors variously described migrants as posing a risk of perpetration and transnationalisation of the conflict.<sup>6</sup> Diasporas, in fact, may not only provide material and political support to the conflicting parties, but they may also carry attitudes of conflict with them and reproduce them within the diaspora. More recent contributions, however, argue that diasporas can also contribute positively to peacebuilding processes by engaging in initiatives that either directly promote profitable dialogue processes or indirectly contribute to economic and social advancement, thus creating the grounds for sustainable peace.<sup>7</sup> Research conducted within the DIASPEACE project among diaspora groups from the Horn of Africa has further confirmed that the latter mobilise substantially for the development of their countries of origin and that a number of activities they undertake are peacebuilding relevant. These initiatives range from advocacy and lobbying in the country of residence, to the initiation of dialogue processes, to projects in the area of relief, development and reconstruction (Warnecke 2010).<sup>8</sup> Diasporas possess a unique set of relations and knowledge that derive from their familiarity with both the country of origin and their countries of residence. This qualifies diasporas as «communities of individuals who may possess resources and have access to international organizations, international media and powerful host governments» (Bercovitch 2007: 21) as well as substantial capital in the countries of origin, thus enabling them to cover a unique bridging position. Migrants, moreover, «are also seen as direct bearers of developmental objectives, reaching places to which other development machinery has little access and doing so without a range

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<sup>5</sup> For further discussion of this definition see Warnecke (2010).

<sup>6</sup> This issue has been explored by many, including Anderson (1992), Collier (2000), Collier and Hoeffler (2004), Demmers (2002), Duffield (2002), Kaldor (2001) and Lyons (2007).

<sup>7</sup> As, for instance, in the works of Cochrane (2007), Hansen (2007), Mohamoud (2006), Nyberg-Sørensen et al. (2002), Østergaard-Nielsen (2006), Smith (2007), Rigby (2006), Warnecke (2010) and Zunzer (2004).

<sup>8</sup> An alternative classification of the ways in which diaspora initiatives can have an impact on peacebuilding is offered in Mohamoud (2006).

of intermediaries» (Raghuram 2009: 104), therefore holding the potential to engage in critical initiatives. The importance of civil-society engagement in peacebuilding is widely recognised (van Leeuwen 2009) and diasporas can rightfully play a role in such a position.

The widespread recognition of the general development potential of migration – and, more recently, of its contribution also to peace and reconstruction processes – has led many national, international and intergovernmental institutions to develop a commitment in this field by making it an explicit policy interest. The European Commission, for instance, has recognised diasporas as being «actors of home country development» and identified a number of initiatives and recommendations to facilitate their direct involvement (EC 2005: 6). Moreover, in the Joint Africa-EU Strategic Partnership «African migrants were explicitly – for almost the first time – given an important role in the promotion of sustainable development in the continent» (Smith and van Naerssen 2009: 19). Within the United Nations, the General Assembly High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development paved the way to the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) in 2005. With the aim of improving cooperation between different actors at the global level, furthermore, various meetings of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) have been preceded by consultation days with civil society organisations, including diaspora ones (Matsas 2008). These initiatives testify a critical turn, in which «[m]igrants themselves have moved into the spotlight, with the result that individual migrants have emerged as important ‘agents of development’» (Piper 2009: 94). The active engagement of diasporas in the field of development cooperation has turned into a theme of growing interest not only among the global actors just cited, but also for individual governments, development institutions and NGOs.<sup>9</sup> The recognition of the increasingly active and prominent role of diasporas in promoting homeland development, in fact, makes their efforts of interest for more traditional development cooperation actors, who feel that migrant initiatives may well complement their own. More specifically, in conflict-affected settings it is recognised that «diasporas may now act on the international stage and have influence on events well beyond one territory, ranging from economic cooperation to conflict duration» (Bercovitch 2007: 21) and that «[s]pecial attention should therefore be paid to opportunities for [them] to engage in programmes in the field of good governance and democratization processes in their countries of origin [...] in peace making and conflict resolution» (Smith and van Naerssen 2009: 21).

A growing willingness to provide room for migrants and diaspora organisations to engage in development cooperation and peacebuilding has therefore arisen, based on a shared consensus «that because of their simultaneous engagement in two or more societies, migrants and their organisations can be effective *partners* for implementing development policies» (de Haas 2006: 4, emphasis added).

The issue of partnership and, more broadly, of possible forms of interaction and collaboration between diaspora and other actors in the development field is the topic at the core of this paper. On the basis of research data collected within the DIASPEACE project, we present a critical review of the actors, measures and initiatives currently in place in various European countries and look at the ways in which these affect collaboration with diasporas in peacebuilding-relevant

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<sup>9</sup> See, among others, AHEAD (2007), COWI/SIDA (2009), de Haas (2006), Bercovitch (2007), Gamlen (2008), GTZ (2009), Horst (2008), Horst and Gaas (2009), Ionescu (2006), Libercier and Schneider (1996), Mohamoud (2009), Nyberg-Sørensen et al. (2002), Østergaard-Nielsen (2001), Smith and van Naerssen (2009) and van Hear et al. (2004).



actions.<sup>10</sup> These cross-country experiences are used as a basis to discuss the main achievements and challenges in this field so far, so as to identify core areas for policy concern, which are presented in the form of recommendations at the end of the paper. The policy recommendations suggested here are therefore grounded in field research, making them of particular interest for external actors wishing to learn from existing experiences that can help them identify better ways of collaborating with diasporas in peacebuilding. The research-based nature of the paper, however, also imposes some limitations. Firstly, the data collected within DIASPEACE limits our knowledge to the initiatives enacted in a restricted number of European countries and concerning the diaspora from the Horn of Africa.<sup>11</sup> The findings presented in this paper, however, still offer a valuable contribution to discussions that go beyond the countries and national groups considered here. Secondly, while recognising the importance of the measures and initiatives undertaken by actors in the countries of residence, this paper does not take into account the equally important part that can be played by the openness to collaboration of Governments in the countries of origin.<sup>12</sup> Despite these limitations, the hope is that this paper will provide external parties with some useful indications that will assist them in further pursuing the active engagement of diasporas as valuable interlocutors in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in war-torn countries.

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<sup>10</sup> *The paper, however, does not attempt to provide an evaluation of the peacebuilding relevance of the various policies and measures it reviews, as this would have required additional data collection in the countries of origin.*

<sup>11</sup> *More specifically fieldwork was undertaken in Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway covering diaspora groups originating from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. Further limitations of the data collected derive from the fact that not all European countries focused on all the diaspora groups concerned. In Italy and Finland, for instance, research was conducted exclusively on the case of the Somali diaspora.*

<sup>12</sup> *On this important issue see, for instance, Agunias (2010), Gamlen (2006), Lacroix and Vezzoli (2010) and Mohamoud (2010).*

In the pages that follow an overview is provided of the main actors and measures encountered in countries covered by the research that provide room for diasporas to collaborate with other actors in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. As most forms of existing cooperation in this field fall under the broader policy framework favouring a role for diasporas as development partners, this is reviewed on a country basis. The section also offers a country-based overview of the scenario for access to funding and of existing efforts to empower diaspora organisations. The reader, however, should bear in mind that the overall volume of development cooperation (and peacebuilding) differs significantly across the countries considered<sup>13</sup> and that differences in state and civil society structures make it impossible to estimate what share of this budget may be accessible to diaspora groups. An additional challenge is posed by the fact that the theme of migration-development, and even more so the theme of peacebuilding, often fall in between the mandates of different institutions and organisations. Moreover, the topic of diaspora engagement in peacebuilding also relates to broader immigration issues that are not covered in this paper, despite the fact that the integration of immigrants is a priority issue for many European countries. It should also be added that the countries covered by the research each have their own immigration history and that in many cases initiatives are still recent or ongoing, therefore making it impossible to fully assess their impact.

### 2.1 Italy<sup>14</sup>

#### Italy-Somalia: a changing engagement and relationship

The Italian colonial past in Somalia strongly influences the relationships between the Somali diaspora and Italian institutions. During the colonial period (1890-1941) and the Italian Protectorate (1950-1960), Italian policy towards Somalia contributed to forging, in the homeland, a Somali elite that in many cases came to Italy as a diaspora immediately after independence (1960). During the 1970s and 1980s, Italian cooperation for development was deeply involved in Somalia. Cooperation programmes were structured within a political system in which the main Italian political parties (Socialist, Communist and Christian Democrats) played a leading role in shaping the objectives and the activities supported in the former colony; this informed what has been called the dominance of 'party politics' that influenced the model of interaction between the two countries, and was reflected in the relationships established at the individual level between Somali leaderships/elites and Italian politicians both in Somalia and in Italy. During this phase the Italian engagement model towards Somalis was mostly based on *individual* interactions between the old Somali elite and the former Italian political establishment. After the collapse of the Somali state (1991) and the concomitant changes that occurred in Italy starting from 1992<sup>15</sup>, the relationships between Italy and Somalia

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<sup>13</sup> According to OECD data, the following net disbursements (in USD millions) were devoted by each country to Overseas Development Assistance in 2009: Italy: 3,313.87 (equivalent to 0.16% of Gross National Income or GNI); Germany: 11,982.42 (0.35% of GNI); the Netherlands: 6,425.26 (0.82% of GNI); Norway: 4,085.84 (1.06% of GNI); Finland: 1,286.14 (0.54% of GNI). Source: OECD StatExtracts available at <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>.

<sup>14</sup> The field research in Italy focused exclusively on the case of the Somali diaspora and was conducted in 5 Regions/Cities (Piemonte-Turin, Lombardia-Milan, Toscana-Firenze, Lazio-Roma and Province of Trento). A total of 24 interviews (16 to external actors and 8 to Somali organisations) were conducted. 22 additional interviews to Somali organisations realised in a previous phase of the DIASPEACE project also informed this section. Furthermore the research team (Petra Mezzetti, Valeria Saggiomo, Matteo Guglielmo) participated in 3 events conducting participant observation.

<sup>15</sup> These changes can be briefly summarised as follows: a) the shift from the 'first' to the 'second' Republic in Italy that involved the dissolution of the Socialist Party; b) the disillusionment regarding the Somali Conflict after the failure of the UNOSOM I Mission.

changed considerably. As a consequence, the individual and preferential ties which represented the praxis of diaspora engagement within the Italian public sphere became less efficient, also due to the decreasing ability of Italian political parties to deal with the deterioration of the Somali conflict. This period saw the decline of relationships established by Somali individuals at the national level, favouring the *local/regional* dimension and the consequent growth and rising role of Somali diaspora associations. Two additional factors account for the increased importance of the local dimension in diaspora engagement activities: the emerging role of decentralised cooperation promoted by the various regions in Italy from the Balkan war onward<sup>16</sup> and the new 1998 immigration law that established social integration measures managed at the regional level for migrants and migrant organisations. With regard to decentralised cooperation, the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia opened up a period of instability and civil war in the Balkan region. As a consequence of geographical proximity and of an increased attention and sensitiveness of the Italian citizenry (especially in the northern Italian regions) towards this situation, this period marked the rise of new local actors in the cooperation field, namely Italian decentralised cooperation. Eventually, decentralised cooperation institutions in Italy contributed to the creation of a favourable environment for cooperating with civil society associations, opening new spaces for migrants' participation in the respective country of residence/homeland. The importance of the first comprehensive immigration law approved in 1998 (Law 40/98) lies in the fact that it included 'social integration measures' for migrants sustained at the Regional level. Regions received funds for these measures from the central government, therefore maximising their own importance in attracting migrant communities and further developing their social trajectory into Italian society. The combination of these two internal factors is illustrative of how national political developments in the host country can serve as shaping elements towards diaspora associationism. Changes occurring in the Italian political context, in fact, have directly and indirectly influenced diaspora associations and their organisation processes.

With regard to the Somali diaspora in Italy, there are about four broad organisational categories that are active at the national and regional levels.<sup>17</sup> Two in particular are relevant for this policy paper, as they present a transnational orientation towards Somalia either in development, or in politics and in peacebuilding. They are described below.

a) Community based organisations (CBOs), are mainly oriented towards integration activities in the host country; their membership is composed by individuals often connected to the former Somali ruling class. In the past, these organisations played a role as reference points for the community/newcomers etc.; this role eventually faded and today Somali CBOs in Italy are less structured, less rich in membership, to the extent that they no longer function as reference points. This is partly due to the extreme fragmentation which affects the Somali diaspora and to clan divisions and dynamics that tend to hamper the representation process of multi-clan associations. Transnational politics (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003) represents the 'shift' in their scopes/orientation over time. The members/leaders active in these associations gained experience in Italian politics and are therefore keen to transfer these acquired 'competences' (*political remittances*) in Somalia. Importantly, however, participation in transnational politics is mostly occurring at the

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<sup>16</sup> Decentralised cooperation delivered by local authorities linking local communities/territories in donor countries and local communities in Third countries.

<sup>17</sup> These are 1) community-based organisations; 2) development organisations; 3) intercultural organisations; and, though less prevalent, 4) youth/second generation organisations and/or discussion groups.

individual level, although operating through the associations means that the latter act as a 'legitimising' forum.

b) Diaspora-initiated development NGOs that implement development projects in Somalia, mostly in South Central and often in the places of origin of the diaspora organisation's leaders and members. A great variety in the levels of formalisation and professionalisation can be found in this category, with associations that have exited the totally voluntary basis and therefore have salaried members. Some of these organisations have developed their capacity over time and may function just like any international NGO, at times even in partnership with other organisations in Italy and through local counterparts that are sometimes run by returnees. Within these organisations the clan dimension seems to be very important in order to act in Somalia, especially for security reasons.

Despite the fact that since the 1990s the Somali diaspora in Italy tended to approach Italian institutions collectively, through associations rather than individually as had been the case in the past, Italian institutions at the central Governmental level (and in some cases also at the non-governmental level) still engage individuals belonging to the Somali diaspora rather than associations. This engagement is rather informal and is aimed at complementing the political analysis of the Somali conflict provided by the Italian Embassies based in Africa. Somali individuals who are engaged by Italian central authorities are selected on the basis of their level of professionalisation. This informal practice has been adopted also by Italian non-governmental actors, who avail themselves of informal consultations with Somali diaspora members for their political analysis and peacebuilding policy in Somalia.

#### Funding opportunities and diaspora empowerment efforts

With regard to more development-oriented and peacebuilding objectives, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has not yet developed specific guidelines, nor a strategic and explicit vision for engaging diaspora groups. Dedicated funding mechanisms to foster the migration-development nexus or peacebuilding activities are so far not in place.<sup>18</sup>

In two cases, however, the Italian MFA has directly engaged Somali diaspora associations for peace and development purposes specifically in Somalia. The first case resulted in a highly externally driven process in which an umbrella of women's diaspora associations was created under the input of the Ministry. The selection process however lacked the adoption of transparent and clear criteria, thus undermining ownership of the entire process. This experience, which represented a somewhat failed opportunity, had a negative influence also on the second case: the IOM MIDA Somalia Programme.<sup>19</sup> Here mistrust by the Somali diaspora community towards the Ministry's approach initially played a divisive role within the Somali community, which ended up not being fully forthcoming about new projects. Other more successful engagement dynamics with diaspora groups have involved the mediation of international organisations or NGOs.

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<sup>18</sup> *Experimental policies and 'pilot' projects funded by the MFA in this domain include i.e. IOM managed Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) Programmes, that in the Italian case have been oriented towards Ghana and Ethiopia (2003); Ghana and Senegal (2006) and more recently also include MIDA Latin America (MIDLA) Programmes and a MIDA-Somalia Project. These programmes have been targeting single migrants' entrepreneurial transnational initiatives as well as collective social initiatives undertaken by diaspora organisations towards the town/village/neighbourhood of origin.*

<sup>19</sup> *This has been true for the first phase of the programme. The second phase, which has just started, is being conducted with a different approach and through the intermediation of an NGO and a think tank. The programme includes capacity building; training; assistance for increasing transnational networking capacities among diaspora groups at the EU level; support to transnational projects in Somaliland and, finally, the possibility of creating a discussion forum/network for Somali diaspora organisations in Italy.*

Local authorities, instead, have developed their own engagement approaches, that are however not widespread and vary in their level of structure. They represent rather 'experimental initiatives', which often depend on the level of activism towards migration issues, on their understanding of the potential role that migrants can play on their territory, on the geographical proximity with migrants' countries of origin and, finally, on the numerical presence of the principal groups/communities in their territories. This approach is in line with the decentralisation reform that has been taking place in Italy since the mid 1990s. As a consequence of this ongoing process, each of the twenty Italian Regions developed their own norms, regulations and modalities of engagement with migrant communities and diasporas, and it is very difficult to trace a univocal model. The following three cases represent advanced, and to some extent exceptional, examples of engagement between the Somali diaspora and local authorities towards peace and development processes in the country of origin; these are the case of the Provincia Autonoma of Trento, the case of the Regione Toscana, and a specific initiative led by the Municipality of Milan.

The Province of Trento avails a considerable budget for financing decentralised cooperation activities with Third countries through local associations and NGOs. NGOs and associations have been applying to this budget following specific guidelines and a one-off registration procedure to the Province that certifies their capacity to operate at the international/transnational level. Diaspora associations and professional diaspora NGOs have also been encouraged by the local authority through start-up funding and training initiatives. Successful examples have involved diasporas from Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Togo, Brazil and from the Balkan area. Regione Toscana has been engaging the Somali diaspora in dialogue fora but never accorded any financial support to diaspora organisations directly. In this regional context one exception is represented by an intercultural and professionalised immigrant NGO that engaged local authorities directly, participating actively in a dialogue forum created for the purpose, building the associations' social capital to be further used for achieving the associations' objectives and priorities.

In 2007/2008 the Municipality of Milan launched a three year programme on co-development for co-funding projects developed by diaspora organisations towards their countries of origin, with the aim of simultaneously sustaining initiatives that have an impact on migrants' integration processes in the territories of residence. Two calls for proposals were issued between 2007-2010 with an overall budget of about € 2 million. Between the two calls a training course on how to draft projects and how to manage associations was also offered to diaspora organisations. The examples mentioned above represent three different models of engagement: Trento is a *virtuous* diaspora engagement model in which diaspora NGOs implementing development and peacebuilding projects in their country of origin apply and receive funding directly from the local authority; Regione Toscana represents a 'two-ways' diaspora engagement model, which unfolds in *direct* engagement for dialogue initiatives, while it is *indirect* for delivering financial support and management, as the latter go preferably to autochthonous NGOs that are considered more 'reliable' and that in turn can engage diaspora organisations; the Municipality of Milan represents a *mixed* model compared to the first two, as the Municipality directly sustains diaspora organisations financially, trying also to favour – as a guarantee factor but also in a broader cooperation approach/vision – partnerships with autochthonous NGOs, Universities, the Private sector, etc. including diaspora organisations at the transnational level. A few Somali diaspora associations actively participated in the calls for proposals with their initiatives.

Whereas there have been some examples of government initiatives on the local level, engagement of Somali diaspora individuals or groups by Italian NGOs are generally scarce and relate to the early/pre-civil war period. These interactions started off with the involvement of Somali individuals (informants, key witnesses,



opponents of the Regime, etc.) and were later consolidated in the form of personal ties and relationships that in many cases are still active and successful (both at the individual level as well as at the organisational level). With regard to Somali people/groups that arrived in Italy from the mid 1990s onward, interaction and engagement with NGOs have been seriously compromised by a climate of mutual suspiciousness and mistrust.

In conclusion, engagement dynamics of Somali diaspora associations on behalf of Italian institutional actors do not follow a vertical model, characterised by the existence of explicit and strategic objectives/policies and guidelines for engaging diasporas, both within the country of residence and towards the country of origin. Instead, they follow a horizontal and highly decentralised model, in which the various actors follow different approaches, in line with their sensitiveness and openness towards diasporas' various needs and with the perceived potential contribution of diaspora groups towards the institutions' own priorities/projects. The local dimension in the Italian case stems as the most dynamic as opposed to engagement strategies towards diaspora groups implemented by institutions at the national level. A tradition of engaging Somali diaspora individuals rather than associations is another feature that characterised the Italian case until the 1990s. Although this is no longer the prevailing strategy for interactions that are being initiated today, in many cases it has favoured the establishment of long-lasting relationships that still remain active.

## **2.2 Germany<sup>20</sup>**

The interest in diasporas as transnational actors, and the very recent political recognition that Germany needs a pro-active and comprehensive approach to migration and integration policies has brought about a wealth of initiatives and projects, but also some new institutions that all seek to contribute to this process. Within this wider context, the migration-development nexus has gained some prominence over the past five to six years, with a wide spectre of conferences, studies and pilot projects having been commissioned. In general, it appears that initiatives in Germany focus on funding and the professionalisation of migrant organisations, fostering networks and testing different forms of cooperation in the course of pilot programmes. Depending on the institutional background of the non-diaspora actors, the overall objective of these initiatives is either to harness the development potential of migrants, or to improve their integration into German civil society structures. Only one institution was found to have projects that are jointly implemented with migrant organisations with an explicit peacebuilding focus, however when applying a broader concept of peacebuilding many other interesting cooperation experiences were observed.

### Institutional initiatives at the federal level

In Germany, official development cooperation is defined by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and mainly implemented, among others, by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the KfW Banking Group, and InWEnt (Capacity Building International). Most initiatives at the federal level to foster the positive effects of international migration have been devised and implemented

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<sup>20</sup> Data collection in Germany was based on an initial mapping exercise that allowed the identification of several relevant institutions. In total, 20 interviews (including 8 representatives of diaspora organisations, 8 NGOs, 5 governmental institutions and semi-governmental institutions) were conducted. In addition, various diaspora and migrant meetings, regional conferences, seminars and workshops were attended. The data collection team was composed of Clara Schmitz-Pranghe, Ruth Vollmer and Andrea Warnecke.

by these organisations that are also represented in the ministry's coordinating body (*Thementeam*) on "Migration and Development".

In 2003, the GTZ organised two conferences on "Migration and Development" and began to conduct a series of studies on the capacities of specific diaspora groups to get engaged in development projects in their countries of origin.<sup>21</sup> In 2007, following the establishment of the Migration and Development Sector Project (*Sektorvorhaben*), the GTZ established a pilot programme on behalf of the BMZ to enhance non-profit diaspora engagement. This programme targets organised diaspora groups in Germany and provides them with the opportunity to implement projects in their countries of origin in collaboration with the GTZ. So far, 26 projects have been funded (out of about 100 applications). Successful applications usually focused on capacity building and in many cases project ideas were further developed to tap into the respective diaspora organisation's particular abilities and capacities. In this regard, ongoing intensive contacts were ensured between one of GTZ's experts and the migrant organisations, ensuring continuous support throughout the application and implementation process. Following the conclusion of its second stage in May 2010, the programme has recently been extended until December 2010. A practical guide "Cooperating with Diaspora Communities" (GTZ 2010) was published earlier this year summing up GTZ's experiences and recommendations in the field. The guidelines point to the role of suitable intermediary institutions, the existence of functioning partnerships with organisations in countries of origin, sensitivity to political attitudes, and they provide examples of different kinds of cooperation.

InWEnt (Capacity Building International) is a state-owned non-profit organisation that provides trainings and seminars in the fields of human resource development, intercultural exchange, and development. Within Germany, a core objective is to provide information and education on development-related issue areas and to support development activities initiated on the regional and local levels. For this purpose, the Service Agency – Communities in One World<sup>22</sup> was established in 2001 to support and accompany the development initiatives and capacities of local authorities and actors. With regard to migrant organisations, the department has implemented a pilot project entitled "Migration and development on the local level" to improve the cooperation between One World initiatives, local institutions and migrant organisations through networking events and seminars in five 'model' communities. A central finding of the pilot was the fact that these initiatives can only be implemented through long-term dedicated efforts at the grassroots level and require a strong commitment by local authorities. For this reason, the field "Migration and development on the local level" will become one of the three core working areas of the Service Agency. InWEnt also currently revises its internal project portfolio with a view to introducing 'migration' as a cross-cutting issue in other programme areas as well. With regard to financial support, InWEnt operates two funding schemes on behalf of the BMZ, both of which focus on development-related information and education in Germany, but vary significantly regarding the funding available for individual projects. The BMZ also directly offers funding to private development actors working in partner countries of German development cooperation. According to Bengo (an advisory body that assists prospective applicants during the proposal stages), 21 migrant organisations working in (mostly West-) African

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<sup>21</sup> The studies can be downloaded from <http://www.gtz.de/de/themen/wirtschaft-beschaeftigung/23881.htm>. With regard to sub-Saharan Africa, diaspora communities from Ghana, Ethiopia, Senegal, and Cameroon were covered.

<sup>22</sup> Servicestelle Kommunen in der Einen Welt (SKEW).

countries have successfully applied for project funding between 1997 and June 2010, implementing a total of 36 projects.

Finally, in September 2009, the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) launched a two-year initiative entitled “Intensified Participation of Migrant Organisations”. The objective of this initiative is to facilitate collaboration between migrant organisations and other CSOs/NGOs by encouraging them to submit joint project proposals to the BAMF.<sup>23</sup> So far, about 200 proposals have been submitted. Although this pilot project somewhat mirrors the one run by the GTZ, the major focus of the initiative lies on improving the integration of migrant organisations in local civil society and institutional structures by encouraging different forms of collaboration: ‘tandem partnerships’, cooperation partnerships, and mentoring.<sup>24</sup>

#### Governmental initiatives and NGO collaboration at the state level<sup>25</sup>

In the state of North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), there are several state and non-state actors who cooperate with and empower migrant organisations from sub-Saharan African states.<sup>26</sup> Over the past five years, a very dense network between these external actors has evolved which is hard to disentangle. Since the late 1990s, the previous regional governments had discussed instruments to support the activities of migrant organisations and gather more in-depth information on this rather unknown field of actors (MASSKS 1999, Jungk 2005). A first funding line for migrant organisations was established in 1997, which until 2005 funded about 20 organisations per annum, covering projects but also institutional funding. Much of the current interest in cooperating with diaspora or migrant organisations from sub-Saharan African states has been stimulated by the Ministry for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration (MGFFI), which was created in 2005 by the newly elected conservative-liberal state government. The MGFFI was the first German ministry with an explicit and prominent focus on integration affairs.<sup>27</sup> As early as 2005, the decision was taken to target activities in the fields of “Migration, Integration and Development” on migrant groups from sub-Saharan Africa (MGFFI 2007). As the ministry was also responsible for international cooperation on the state level, it was in the rather unique position to connect migration/integration policies with transnational/international objectives. It sought to foster migrants’ transnational activities by commissioning studies, organising training and capacity building seminars, supporting networking activities, funding projects in Germany

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<sup>23</sup> The project is funded by BAMF, the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ).

<sup>24</sup> Additional detailed information on the projects funded so far can be viewed under: [http://www.integration-in-deutschland.de/cdn\\_110/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Integration/Downloads/Integrationsprojekte/modellprojekte,templateId=raw,property=publicationFile.pdf/modellprojekte.pdf](http://www.integration-in-deutschland.de/cdn_110/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Integration/Downloads/Integrationsprojekte/modellprojekte,templateId=raw,property=publicationFile.pdf/modellprojekte.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> In addition to covering initiatives on the federal level, research was conducted on state initiatives in North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW). Firstly, home to roughly 18 million people, NRW is by far the most populous state in Germany and also has the highest overall number of migrant inhabitants, be they citizens of sub-Saharan African countries or naturalized German citizens. Secondly, NRW has effectively taken the lead regarding migration-development initiatives, as most practical efforts towards fostering cooperation between state / non-state actors and diaspora organisations have been developed and tested in NRW.

<sup>26</sup> As the majority of sub-Saharan migrants in NRW originate from Ghana, the DR Congo, and Nigeria, some projects and programmes explicitly focus on these countries of origin.

<sup>27</sup> Following the recent state elections, these sectoral competences have recently been redefined and the issue of integration will be covered by the Ministry for Labour and Integration, while international cooperation has been moved to the state chancellery.



and in developing countries (via InWEnt), and organising events in the fields of migration and development also via other regional actors such as the One World Network NRW e.V. (EWN), and the Unit for Migration and Development.

In addition to the InWEnt Service Agency in Bonn, InWEnt's regional centre for NRW in Düsseldorf also runs two funding programmes on behalf of the state government, which also, though not exclusively, target migrant organisations: 1) a small funding line for NGOs and associations that plan to implement development projects abroad (*Auslandsprojekte*); and 2) a funding line for providing information and education on development-related issues within Germany. In both cases, there is a strong focus on supporting and advising particularly migrant organisations throughout the application process. At the utmost, 30 to 40 development projects can be funded p.a., out of which on average five to seven are run by migrant organisations.

The One World Network (EWN) is a federation of about 250 associations and 1,100 additional individual members that focus on development and intercultural exchange in NRW. Its overall objective is to foster and enhance development activities on the regional and local levels. Together with InWEnt, in 2005 the One World Network re-launched<sup>28</sup> the *Koordinatorenprogramm* (Coordinators' Programme) on behalf of the state government. This programme is meant to improve the coordination of activities and initiatives on the grassroots level by facilitating cooperation among stakeholders in different regions of NRW (regional coordinators) as well as cooperation centred around specific issue areas (thematic coordinators). The programme presently comprises 12 regional coordinators and 10 thematic units (*Fachstellen*), including one unit and coordinator for "Migration and Development". The Unit for Migration and Development (*Fachstelle Migration und Entwicklung*) was commissioned by the MGFFI in 2006 and is based at the Forum for Social Innovations in Solingen. Its main purpose is to foster and accompany networking processes among African diaspora and migrant organisations and to support this process by offering assistance, training seminars and exchange fora. Following a kick-off workshop bringing together interested actors in 2006, a series of so-called regional conferences was launched to bring together a broad range of organisations in the different regions of NRW. Targeted organisations include migrant organisations, development associations, universities, churches, charitable organisations, and local councils.

One of the prime successes of these sustained, regional, and bottom-up networking processes is the establishment of regional African networking associations in different parts of NRW, which were initiated by diaspora members. Another recent success that was also supported through the networking activities is the inclusion of African representatives in the newly elected integration councils in ten cities/municipalities earlier this year. Together with InWEnt, the Service Agency, the MGFFI, the Stiftung Umwelt und Entwicklung and local authorities, capacity seminars are organised to improve the professional skills of organisations as a follow-up to the regional conferences. These seminars are highly sought after by diaspora representatives and usually focus on funding procedures and additional organisational skills. While these seminars clearly have a technical focus, they are also important for overcoming barriers between the diaspora on the one hand and other institutional actors on the other. The close cooperation of state and non-state actors in NRW has contributed to facilitating greater visibility, improving capacities and improving local structures and networks. According to several interviewees, however, many migrants still find

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<sup>28</sup> A smaller preceding programme (*Promotorenprogramm*) had already been initiated by the One World Network and InWEnt in 1996, albeit not yet with an explicit focus on migration.

it difficult to access local formal and informal structures, and to gather relevant information. Diaspora members are hardly ever among the staff of larger institutions, which are in turn perceived by many migrants as inaccessible and powerful actors whose priorities or funding principles are little known.

### NGOs and CSOs

In Germany, there is a high number of registered associations (about 500,000, 50% of which are recognised as charitable organisations), as well as a broad range of foundations, trade unions and church institutions and institutes that implement projects and programmes, some of which also target migrant organisations. While some of these run special programmes in the field of migration-development or offer funding, others, especially the smaller grassroots initiatives, play a significant role during the earlier stages of organisational development by providing long-term structural support and facilities. Charitable organisations such as Caritas, Workers' Welfare Association (AWO), or the Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (DPWV), primarily provide advice and support to individual migrants on a wide variety of issues. Some of these charities also provide (limited) financial and bureaucratic support to migrant and refugee associations to help develop initial structures and find access to other actors. Several One World initiatives / development organisations supply similar forms of support, particularly by offering meeting rooms, language classes, providing contacts with other organisations and advice on funding, relevant actors etc. According to several of our interviewees, these very open, i.e. little specialised, and long-term structural forms of support are vital for migrants in that they help to overcome structural barriers and disseminate information and contacts that are otherwise hard to find especially for less-well integrated migrants.

Despite its relatively recent engagement in this field, Germany has made some progress in promoting and implementing migrant involvement in the development field. Initiatives at the federal level are complemented by those initiated at the state level. In this respect, NRW has taken the lead, developing and testing ways of establishing cooperation between external actors and diaspora organisations. With regard to systematic approaches and programmes to empower migrant organisations, the two priorities among external actors in Germany appear to be *funding* and *networking*. However, a preliminary review of recent pilot programmes offering funding to migrant organisations indicates that formal and institutional prerequisites are still very high for smaller migrant organisations. When addressing this gap, it seems inevitable to also improve the chances and perspectives for *individual* migrants to participate in the labour market and other social spheres, thereby fostering their overall social integration, in addition to providing *institutional* support and services.

## **2.3 The Netherlands<sup>29</sup>**

The Netherlands host numerous organisations with an interest in peacebuilding and, more broadly, offer a conducive environment for the engagement of diasporas as partners in the development field. This translates into a number of cases for

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<sup>29</sup> This section is based on 18 in-depth interviews (3 with institutional actors at the governmental and intergovernmental level, 12 with NGOs and CSOs, 3 with diaspora organisations). These were identified following a mapping exercise identifying the main actors active in the field of peacebuilding and/or engaging with diaspora in the Netherlands. This material was further integrated with the analysis of 22 documents (policy memoranda, project documents, evaluation reports and publications), as well as with observations conducted at 5 relevant public events. Material deriving from previous research undertaken by the ADPC within DIASPEACE was also consulted. The ADPC wishes to acknowledge the work of Laura Eggens, Inge Ortelee and Robert Veldwijk who contributed to the data collection and to the drafting of a field report that has largely inspired this section.

possible collaboration between diaspora organisations and third parties in actions that are peacebuilding-relevant.

### A strong commitment at the national level

The assumption that diaspora organisations can and should be more involved in development programmes because they can be a valuable actor in this field is widely-held in the Netherlands. At the national level, as far back as the 1970s the Dutch Government started policies and programmes that have been labelled as «migration and development avant la lettre» (de Haas 2006: 32). At the time, the Dutch Government was involved in supporting migrants wishing to return to their countries of origin to use their skills and resources to the advantage of local development, representing one of the first attempts worldwide to combine migration policies and international development co-operation (Bonjour 2005, de Haas 2006, Obdeijn 1987). Over the years and through the publication of three policy Memoranda on migration-development (in 1996, 2004 and 2008),<sup>30</sup> the perspective of the Dutch Government has been refined, shifting from a strong interest for return migration<sup>31</sup> to a broader and more inclusive understanding of the relation between migration and development. In particular, the 2008 Memorandum includes among its policy priorities a will to strengthen the involvement of migrant organisations and to engage them directly as development actors. The document states that: «[m]igrants' activities can bring added value to the development of their countries of origin. Migrants have useful networks, and are often better acquainted with legislation in their countries of origin. [...] Migrants' added value can also consist in a bridging function. Increased cooperation between traditional Dutch development organisations and migrant organisations can maximise this potential» (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008: 54-55). A joint effort of the Minister for Development Cooperation and of the State Secretary for Justice, the 2008 Memorandum confirms the Netherlands' pioneering position in the field of migration-development policy and testifies the country's explicit attempt to identify shared views and strategies that cut across different Government departments and ministries. In addition, the Division for Consular Affairs and Migration (DCM) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is mandated to mainstream an attention for migration also across other Divisions.

The DCM also promotes a yearly consultation that is open to the participation of different diaspora organisations, in which their role is discussed as development partners, as well as in the definition of policies towards their countries of origin and in the international arena.<sup>32</sup> Within this framework, for instance, the diaspora recently played an active role in the pre-consultation sessions that took place for the latest GFMD, therefore ensuring that it is part of the discussion at the policy level. Some of the consultations promoted by the Dutch Government have a direct relevance for diaspora engagement specifically in the field of peacebuilding. Following an exploratory study on the potential for peacebuilding of diasporas originating from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region commissioned by the Division for Sub-Saharan Africa (DAF) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mohamoud 2005), diaspora groups are regularly invited to take part in consultation meetings

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<sup>30</sup> For further insight into the policy Memoranda of 1996 and 2004 see Bonjour (2004), de Haas (2006), Hermele (1997), IOM (2008).

<sup>31</sup> That still remains visible in a number of projects run in partnership with the IOM for the permanent or temporary return of foreign nationals to their countries of origin.

<sup>32</sup> Further details on these indirect efforts to involve diasporas in policy formulation are illustrated in Groot and Gibbons (2007) and in an IOM report on engaging diasporas as development partners (Ionescu 2006: 24-25).

and workshops. Some of these have involved specific national diaspora groups from East Africa and from the Horn, such as the Sudanese and, more recently, the Somalis. These initiatives reflect a constructive approach to the peace process in these countries that is inclusive of dialogue with their diasporas.

Alongside the regular search for dialogue opportunities through consultation, the Dutch Government supports an active role of diaspora in development in a number of additional ways. The policy Memorandum declares a commitment to strengthen the capacity of the diaspora by stating that «[t]he government would like migrant organisations to set up their own umbrella organisation, or a similar construction [...]. It is prepared to offer them assistance in doing so» (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008: 56). In addition, the Dutch Government is open to provide funding to suitably qualified diaspora organisations. In this sense, a few cases exist of direct financial support from the Government to diaspora organisations,<sup>33</sup> however the majority of funding for diaspora development initiatives is channelled indirectly through the Dutch system of co-financing organisations.

### Co-financing Agencies and Linkis

The co-financing system has been in place in the Netherlands since 1980 and it sees the Government channel «substantial structural funds to a small number of Dutch development NGOs known as co-financing agencies. Traditionally, the most prominent of these co-financing agencies (CFAs) have been Oxfam Novib, Cordaid (Catholic), ICCO (Protestant) and Hivos (Humanist)» (de Haas 2006: 32). The CFAs rely on a significant budget with which they support the projects of civil society organisations. The supposed aim is to offer an alternative channel to bilateral and multilateral aid in which private initiatives and face-to-face relations with partners are favoured. This setup offers the principal means for diaspora organisations to access funding for their own projects. Diaspora organisations, in fact, alongside other Netherlands-based civil society organisations, can approach the co-financing organisations through their Front Offices that deal with requests for support and funding. Since 2004 this contact has been facilitated through the establishment of the Linkis platform.<sup>34</sup> Outcome of a coalition between the CFAs together with NCDO<sup>35</sup> and COS-Nederland<sup>36</sup>, Linkis is a digital information window where the organisations cooperate in providing advice and support to organisations that are searching for information or funds for their initiatives in the development field. Some of the Linkis promoters have a target of approving a certain quota of interventions presented by diaspora organisations, although this is not specifically mentioned in the Linkis strategy. In addition to Linkis, smaller funding opportunities exist in

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<sup>33</sup> Among these SEVA Network Foundation, a Hindu diaspora organisation that is now recognised as a fully fledged development NGO and receives Thematische Medefinanciering subsidies (TMF) granted by the Government to civil society organisations involved in development cooperation. The African Diaspora Policy Centre is another example of a young diaspora organisation that receives direct funding from the Ministry for its projects.

<sup>34</sup> Low-Threshold Initiatives Contact and Information Centre for International Cooperation. See [www.linkis.nl](http://www.linkis.nl).

<sup>35</sup> National Commission for international cooperation and Sustainable Development. The NCDO assists people and organisations in the Netherlands who wish to engage in development work through support with advice and subsidies. Through its Small-Scale Local Activities (KPA) programme, for instance, it provides funding for small scale development projects. See [www.ncdo.nl](http://www.ncdo.nl).

<sup>36</sup> The Netherlands Local Development Cooperation Centre is a nationwide, independent association of Dutch centres for international cooperation, organised in a national office and various local offices. This delocalised structure allows COS to be uniquely embedded in the different regions. See [www.cossen.nl](http://www.cossen.nl).

the Netherlands that specifically target diaspora organisations, such as the yearly *ideeënwedstrijd* contest awarding € 10,000 of seed funding to the best project ideas presented by migrants.<sup>37</sup>

Despite this relatively rich funding scenario for diasporas to engage directly in development and peacebuilding, other factors may however condition the effective possibility for this to happen. The Dutch Government, for instance, establishes a list of partner countries that are eligible for development assistance.<sup>38</sup> The exclusion of certain countries from the list makes it more difficult for diaspora members of that nationality to access public funds for development purposes in their countries of origin. This can be partly compensated by CFAs and NGOs, who also have their own lists of priority countries and might intervene in some of those that are not covered by the Dutch Government.<sup>39</sup> Thanks to the funding opportunities in place in the Netherlands, diaspora organisations from the Horn of Africa have received direct support to implement a variety of activities that can have an impact on peace processes in the country of origin, such as awareness raising campaigns, conferences, lobbying initiatives and development projects.<sup>40</sup>

### Diaspora empowerment, consultation and partnership

Alongside facilitating access to project funding through Linkis, alternative efforts to empower the diaspora are undertaken by various external actors in the Netherlands. Some co-financing agencies had longstanding collaborations with diaspora organisations long before the creation of the Linkis platform. The organisations that merged to form today's Cordaid,<sup>41</sup> in particular, had a long history of collaborating with migrant organisations that dates back to the 1980s and 1990s. Oxfam Novib is another prominent CFA currently playing a key role in the empowerment of diaspora organisations. The NCDO and COS Nederland are also active in supporting diaspora initiatives. Activities aiming at reinforcing the diaspora in the Netherlands largely take the form of strengthening or favouring the establishment of diaspora networks and platforms, promoting migrant lobby and advocacy, and providing capacity building training.

On the one hand, the existence of many small diaspora organisations is a source of frustration for many Dutch actors, who call for more unifying umbrella organisations with clear representatives. While they understand the reasons behind a fragmented diaspora, they prefer to collaborate with a group that has 'one voice'. On the other hand, diaspora groups have become increasingly aware of the value of working together. A number of diaspora network organisations have thus been established, out of the initiative of different diaspora groups and, in some cases, with the assistance and guidance of supporting third parties.<sup>42</sup> Some of these

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<sup>37</sup> The initiative is supported by Cordaid, SMS and Oikos. See [www.ideeenwedstrijd.nl](http://www.ideeenwedstrijd.nl).

<sup>38</sup> The full list, which may be subject to periodic revision, is available in the latest policy Memorandum on migration and development (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008).

<sup>39</sup> For the countries covered by DIASPEACE, for instance, Eritrea and Somalia are not eligible for funding from the Dutch Government but they are focal countries for large organisations such as Oxfam Novib and Care Nederland.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of the nature of activities promoted in the Netherlands by diaspora organisations from the Horn of Africa and the ways in which they are peacebuilding relevant see Warnecke et al. (2009) and Warnecke (2010).

<sup>41</sup> I.e. the Dutch CFA Bilance with Memisa Medicus Mundi and Mensen in Nood.

<sup>42</sup> Among the most notable examples are the already mentioned SEVA Network Foundation, SMS and MOS (supported largely by Cordaid), the Diaspora Forum for Development (DFD) and Multicultural Women Peacemakers Network (MWPN, both supported by Oxfam Novib).



organisations have a strong peacebuilding relevance, either when a multi-national group commits to a peace-related focus (as in the case of the Multicultural Women Peacemakers Network), or when diaspora groups of one nationality set up unifying networks (such as ENNOS and NedSom for the Ethiopian and Somali diasporas respectively). Membership in such alliances allows diaspora organisations to learn from each other and to identify shared strategies and initiatives, thereby improving coordination as well as facilitating dialogue with external parties. Some of these organisations, in fact, have become valuable actors in the development scene, however critics have also raised the concern that there could be a risk of some of these initiatives being donor-driven.

Many of the efforts of Dutch actors involving diaspora focus also on strengthening the capacity of these networks as well as of smaller diaspora organisations. Training is an area in which many external parties invest. While covering a vast array of skills needed to implement projects independently in the development field, some of these trainings aim specifically at equipping diaspora members with peacebuilding relevant tools. In this vein, various NGOs, CSOs and Dutch Universities have established joint training programmes that specifically target the diaspora. The African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) have many years of experience conducting similar training. The courses not only allow diasporas to enhance their peacebuilding skills, but they also serve as an important opportunity for contact to be established between diaspora organisations and potential external collaborators. In addition to these measures, some Dutch development organisations have adopted internal staff diversification policies, favouring the recruitment of candidates with a diaspora background. This can be seen as a long-term diaspora empowerment measure insofar as it has favoured the professionalization of diaspora individuals, creating the grounds for acquired qualifications and experience to feed back into diaspora organisations.

Additional ways in which diaspora and external parties collaborate in peacebuilding-relevant spheres are represented by consultation processes, the use of diaspora experts and the establishment of full partnerships in the achievement of development objectives. Alongside the consultation processes promoted directly by the Dutch Government described above, other actors have involved diasporas in similar ways. As part of the activities of its peacebuilding department, for instance, ICCO organised a number of meetings, public debates and expert gatherings with the aim of actively involving the Sudanese-Dutch Diaspora in peace initiatives in Sudan (Mohamoud 2004). In the light of migration-development having become a popular trend, other organisations have opened up their own activities, inviting diaspora to get directly involved as experts or resource persons. Many training and awareness-raising campaigns foresee the participation of migrants, opening up a window of opportunity for diaspora to participate and to broaden public knowledge of the situation in their countries. The IOM has also established a fruitful working relationship with diaspora individuals and organisations. In particular within its Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) programme, the IOM relies on the assistance of Ethiopian actors to disseminate information about the project among individual Ethiopians interested in returning to their country of origin for a limited period to contribute to local development.

More explicit forms of collaboration between diaspora and external actors are to be found in relatively few cases of full partnership for the joint implementation of a project. In these cases the diaspora and external actor are on a par in a relationship that sees them share roles and responsibilities for the co-running of a project. An example is offered by the collaboration between Care Nederland and the Somali diaspora organisation NedSom in the Diaspora Partnership Programme.

This project aimed at improving the capacity of local organisations in Puntland and Somaliland, while enhancing the role of the diaspora in the rehabilitation process. Although lacking an explicit peacebuilding focus, the programme wished to directly address some of the root causes behind the conflict by strengthening local civil society. In a similar vein to IOM's TRQN programme, professionals from the diaspora went to their country of origin on short term assignments. Although this programme (concluded in 2008) did not have a direct follow-up, many of the diaspora involved at the time are frequently still acting as consultants in Somalia. The establishment of this partnership represents an interesting way for diasporas to participate in more substantial projects than those possible through the support of Linkis. As an established senior partner, Care was able to meet the necessary requirements for the funders that diaspora organisations often lack. The issue of access to resources and funding for large-scale projects is, in fact, still difficult for diaspora organisations in the Netherlands. Alongside the Care-NedSom example, other attempts exist to overcome this difficulty. In the recently held call for applications for the latest co-financing subsidy round,<sup>43</sup> for instance, Oxfam Novib presented its programme in the form of an alliance in which diaspora organisations were incorporated, including organisations from the Horn of Africa. The latter thus face the opportunity of accessing structural funds that can be put towards strengthening many peace-relevant projects promoted in the country of origin.<sup>44</sup>

In all, the Dutch context offers various possibilities for diasporas to contribute to peacebuilding. Recognising the dedication and drive that diaspora organisations and individuals have, many external actors prove an inclination to establish dialogue and collaboration with the diaspora. Diaspora organisations have also (albeit to a small extent) become competitors for funds and they have become a far more visible actor on the Dutch development scene. They have come to realise the value of working together both with other diaspora organisations and with external parties. The culture of the development sector in the Netherlands however also restricts the engagement of diaspora in peacebuilding activities in several ways. Particularly when it comes to organisations (or divisions within organisations) that have a specific thematic focus on peacebuilding, in fact, many projects are still implemented by Dutch external actors without the involvement of diaspora.

## **2.4 Norway<sup>45</sup>**

Norway has a relatively recent migration history and as such, initiatives to engage diasporas in peacebuilding are also very recent. Most of the focus on diaspora engagement has been in relation to development cooperation, and has been guided by policy documents and governmental initiatives. Among NGOs, cooperation with migrant groups in Norway who are engaging transnationally is very recent and largely stimulated by national-level government policy. At the same time, Norway has an active civil society life consisting of small-scale voluntary initiatives and

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<sup>43</sup> MFS2, for the period 2011-2015.

<sup>44</sup> Reference is, in particular, to the Somali diaspora organisation Hirda. The peacebuilding potential of its activities is discussed in Mohamoud (2005) and Otieno (2010).

<sup>45</sup> This section is based on research carried out by Karin Afeef, Marta Bivand Erdal, Rojan Ezzati and Cindy Horst. After a mapping exercise of all potential governmental and non-governmental actors engaging diasporas, 15 interviews and 2 focus group discussions were conducted (4 interviews and 1 focus group with government employees, 9 with NGOs, 2 with CBOs and a focus group discussion with diaspora organisations benefiting from the Pilot Project Pakistan). Furthermore, 15 events were observed or existing reports of events were analysed. And finally, 28 documents from governmental and non-governmental actors were analysed including policy documents, speeches, yearly reports, field trip reports.

places great value on solidarity initiatives by Norwegian citizens spread across the vast country in often quite isolated areas. As such, whereas it is possible here to present a relatively complete overview of national-level initiatives, it is impossible to provide an overview of all local-level initiatives.<sup>46</sup> Whereas diaspora engagement initiatives that focus specifically on engagement with peacebuilding are rare it is important to note that, among the ten largest non-western immigrant communities in Norway, six originate from conflict or post-conflict settings.<sup>47</sup> As such, in practice peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction will need to be addressed when engaging with these groups.

### Governmental level

With the increasing international interest over the past decade, among others observed in the ongoing Migration-Development forums at government level, Norway has become an active participant in international debates. This political interest, strongly facilitated by the personal dedication of individuals like Minister of the Environment and International Development Erik Solheim, has led to the creation of a migration-development project. This project ran from 2007 to 2009, allowing one senior and one junior staff to work on 'mainstreaming' migration-development thinking into the ministry, Norad and beyond. The unit has furthermore attempted to establish synergies between work done within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), in particular on development, and other ministries working on issues related to migration, immigrants and integration in Norway – in particular the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.<sup>48</sup> An important aim of the Norwegian government's work on Migration and Development has been to seek to integrate different ministries, with different responsibilities and agendas, in an effort to bring together policies which are related. While this is something that is stressed repeatedly, it is doubtful this aim has been achieved yet as initiatives were mainly established within the MFA, through the former migration-development project, Peace and Reconciliation and regional units. There seems to be interest within the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion as well, but as this is not matched with explicit policies on the topic yet, so far this has not really led to any action.<sup>49</sup>

The Norwegian Government highlights the importance of including diaspora groups in development cooperation and foreign policy in White papers no 13 (2008-2009), *Climate, conflict and capital: Norwegian development policy adapting to change*, and no 15 (2008-2009), *Interests, responsibilities and possibilities: Main contours of Norwegian foreign policy*. This policy is further reflected in the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)'s Principles for Support to Civil Society in the South, revised in May 2009, as the last of these six principles is dedicated solely to promoting diaspora participation in development work. These three documents (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009a and 2009b, Norad 2009) provide a good overview of Norwegian government policy, discussing why it is important to engage diaspora groups and what resources diaspora members have (Erdal and Horst 2010: 9).

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<sup>46</sup> Research concentrated on the Oslo area.

<sup>47</sup> In 2009, the ten largest groups were: Iraq (19,197), Somalia (17,255), Pakistan (16,615), Iran (13,001), Vietnam (12,803), Philippines (11,033), Thailand (10,647), Turkey (10,039), Sri Lanka (8,450) and Afghanistan (7,809).

<sup>48</sup> And to a smaller extent the Ministries of Justice and Finance.

<sup>49</sup> It is important to note that the situation is very dynamic and currently important decisions are being made on the future of diaspora engagement in Norway, following a review of Pilot Project Pakistan. It is not unlikely this Ministry will have a more extensive role in the years to come.



In these policy documents, the Norwegian government lists a number of important reasons justifying the importance of engaging members of the diaspora in development cooperation (see also Erdal and Horst 2010: 9-10). Firstly, Norway is home to large numbers of immigrants and Norwegians with migrant backgrounds. The 'new' Norway opens up for new possibilities where the Norwegian society will benefit greatly from a policy that allows for increased participation in foreign policy and development cooperation (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009b: 70). The documents stress that the resources of migrants have been utilised too little in Norway and that this needs to change both for the benefit of the Norwegian society and the individuals involved: «[d]ouble allegiances, multiple identities and experiences from war and conflict have so far not been identified as a resource, but rather as a social challenge». «We must recognize that the identities of the future will extend beyond the national ones and that many people will have strong ties to several countries and communities» (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009b: 70). By recognising the new reality of a diverse Norway in which a number of citizens have transnational ties, development assistance work can for example build on the advantages they may have as bridges between societies and on their key role in transferring social knowledge (Norad 2009: 19).

Within the Norwegian MFA, regional units and the Peace and Reconciliation unit are among the ones that are expected to implement some of the above mentioned policies. Although these units do not have explicit strategies on how to do this as of yet, they relate to the topic through meetings, seminars and funding – often as a result of diaspora organisations and individuals knocking on their door. Especially the Somali and the Sri Lankan diaspora are mentioned frequently.<sup>50</sup> Besides the fact that these two groups are among the ten largest non-western communities in Norway, another important reason for this is the level of transnational engagement and pro-activeness these two groups portray in engaging external actors (Erdal and Horst 2010: 41). A number of obstacles are often mentioned, which could provide further insight into the fact that in Norway, engagements in peacebuilding have so far not been focused on so much. In the Somali case, the high degree of fragmentation along regional, clan, socio-economic, religious, gender, generational and political lines is observed and considered highly problematic. Attempts to address this issue have focused on requests for umbrella organisations or nation-wide clan-representation. Furthermore, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDI) and the MFA have financially supported extensive dialogue efforts between sub-clans that were facilitated by the Nansen Peace Centre. In the Sri Lankan case, the level of politicisation is indicated to be a main concern, mostly leading to the decision not to engage. For those actors operating in Sri Lanka, it is highly problematic to be seen to engage with the Tamil diaspora, because of the tense relationship between this diaspora and the government. This is a fact not uncommon to refugee populations, including the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporas, and deserves attention as a major challenge in engaging conflict-induced diasporas (Erdal and Horst 2010: 42).

#### Non-governmental level

Governmental policy documents mention a number of concrete initiatives underway to facilitate diaspora engagement, including cost reduction and providing legal options for sending remittances and a pilot project for diaspora development in Norway. The MFA and Norad were responsible for setting up this pilot project,

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<sup>50</sup> *Smaller groups like Ethiopians, Eritreans, Congolese and others have also been important in the Norwegian context.*

involving the large Pakistani diaspora in Norway.<sup>51</sup> The project was launched in June 2008 and implemented by a secretariat including the Development Fund and Norwegian Church Aid. The secretariat, and in particular Development Fund, has been responsible for practical implementation, management of grants, quality assurance and capacity building in the Norwegian-Pakistani community. A resource organisation, Sungi, has had the responsibility for capacity building and quality assurance of project implementation and partners in Pakistan (Erdal and Horst 2010: 12). Ten grants were awarded between 2008 and presently, with a match-funding ratio of 50-50 and a minimum input of 100,000 NOK.<sup>52</sup> In addition, several of the participating organisations have received training from the Norwegian Development Network (Bistandstorget) through their development school (bistandsskolen), from Development Fund and Sungi. Furthermore, a number of other organisations have been in dialogue with the secretariat regarding new applications. The secretariat also established a consultative group of Norwegian Pakistanis, in order to respect the principle of openness and a participatory approach, as well as offering another channel for competence building related to development management.

The main purpose of the Pilot Project Pakistan was to prepare the ground for future solutions to the challenge of involving diasporas in development cooperation from Norway, with a focus on improving development impacts of diaspora engagements, putting them in a better position to compete for funding, building their competence and making more use of their expertise. A review that was published and presented in June 2010 (Erdal and Horst 2010) forms the starting point for discussions on what lessons can be learned from the pilot and how to apply these lessons to other groups. Recommendations include the establishment of a Diaspora Resource Centre, with the task of building competence and strengthening networking among and between diaspora organisations and Norwegian NGOs and CSOs. Project funding mechanisms are currently being looked into.

The Norwegian NGOs involved in the Pilot Project Pakistan are among those most interested in the topic of diaspora engagement, and in particular Development Fund engages in a number of smaller initiatives that go beyond the Pakistani diaspora.<sup>53</sup> For the duration of the pilot, one employee has been working on migration-development initiatives within Development Fund, which for example also included more peacebuilding-relevant engagements with Ethiopian and Tamil organisations and individuals in Norway. Larger NGOs face greater difficulty fitting migration-development activities in their mandate and practice, because they are implementing projects either directly or through local partners. Still, recently the topic has been discussed more, partly because of the pressure created by government policy and partly because of consistent pressure from diaspora groups. A number of NGOs have as a consequence created diaspora-components in new projects, or have focused on recruitment, but in general there is still considerable scepticism. Some employees within the larger organisations insist that they feel this is yet another trend 'pushed' on to them. Often, they question the motivations for this push, the government's dedication to really commit to it, the possibility to

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<sup>51</sup> *The Pakistani community is one of the largest and most established migrant communities in Norway, having arrived in large numbers from the 1970s and consisting of 16,615 members (2009). Although surpassed in current numbers by Iraqis and Somalis, these communities arrived much more recently and started growing exponentially only from the late 1990s.*

<sup>52</sup> *Equivalent to approximately €12,500.*

<sup>53</sup> *An important reason for this is that Development Fund did not actually work in Pakistan before, but is interested in diaspora engagement more generally. The topic fits their mandate as a solidarity organisation – they cooperate with a variety of Norwegian small- and medium-level actors.*

implement policies in practice, and the value of diaspora engagement in itself. As such, in general there has been very little concrete action taken by larger Norwegian NGOs to incorporate migration-development thinking in their programming.

Among smaller civil society actors engaged with the topic, in particular umbrella organisations and faith-based organisations, there seems to be more enthusiasm and involvement, but less resources and capacities. These small and often voluntary organisations would like to cooperate more with diaspora organisations, but they simply do not have the capacity and resources to provide them with all of the assistance and support needed for project planning and development. The experience is that helping them with this involves considerable capacity building and creates an extra workload which small organisations cannot really afford. The most common challenges in their involvement with diasporas are linked to communication problems, different ways of doing things, or what is often called a 'lack of structure' within the diaspora organisations. Furthermore, internal power struggles within the organisations as well as among funders are indicated as major challenges. Still, those interviewed do put in extra efforts due to personal or ideological convictions, and often the work also seems to derive from religious beliefs. As such, there are a number of existing examples where smaller Norwegian organisations cooperate in various ways with diaspora organisations or individuals in implementing projects in countries of origin, including in Somalia and Sri Lanka.<sup>54</sup>

In sum, the situation in Norway is such that policies are remarkably well developed and the country is rapidly expanding its engagement in the field of migration-development. A focus on conflict-induced diasporas has so far largely been avoided in practice, mainly because of concerns about fragmentation and politicisation. At the same time, the numeric importance of conflict-derived diasporas in Norway means that it is unavoidable that, in the near future, these issues will need to be addressed and conflict-induced diasporas will be included in initiatives. Because many initiatives remain at the pilot level, the results from national policies are still quite limited. Furthermore, a cause of concern is the fact that the Norwegian case is strongly characterised by a top-down approach by some of the government actors involved – both towards NGOs and diaspora organisations. Yet because at least the policies are in place, there is space for a greater push from below, since government and NGOs can be held accountable by diaspora organisations and others concerned with migration-development issues. Furthermore, existing smaller-scale and less coordinated civil society initiatives may benefit from the fact that policies are in place – for example because more funding and/or coordination may be made available in the near future.

## **2.5 Finland<sup>55</sup>**

Attempts to engage diasporas into peacebuilding are recent in Finland and are not guided by any general policies on migration-development or peacebuilding. The lack of specific policies may, at least partly, be due to Finland's recent immigration

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<sup>54</sup> For example, there are ten diaspora organisations that are members of FOKUS, a women development umbrella; the Nansen Peace Centre engages in various relevant activities; health associations and personnel work together with individuals and organisations of Somali and Tamil background; and partnerships exists between small CSOs or municipalities and the Somali diaspora.

<sup>55</sup> This section is based on research conducted in Finland with an exclusive focus on the Somali diaspora. This choice was motivated by the size and visibility of this group in the country. The Somalis are also one of the most active immigrant groups in Finland engaging with external actors concerning activities in the countries of origin. The empirical data collected consists of 29 interviews (11 with Finnish NGOs, 11 with Somalis, 7 with officials at the governmental and inter-governmental levels). 4 relevant events were also attended and observed. In addition, 21 interviews from previous research undertaken within DIASPEACE integrated the above data. The research was conducted in the metropolitan area of Finland (cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa).

history and to the comparatively small number of immigrants in the country. The government has however recognised immigration as a 'development issue' and several statements are contained in government resolutions. The importance of coherence between migration and development policies has been recognised in Finland and the Government Resolution on Government Migration Policy Programme, for example, states that «migration issues shall be comprehensively examined from the aspect of development policy in a bid to realise the benefits of Finland, the developing country concerned and the immigrants themselves» (Government of Finland Resolution 2006: 38-39). The authority responsible for realizing this is the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). Immigration and integration issues in general fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Interior. In order to try and achieve coherence between these bodies, representatives of the MFA, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy are reported to meet on a regular basis to discuss development and international migration.

#### Institutional initiatives at the governmental level

In the Government Resolution on Development Policy (Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2004) migration is defined as one of the areas to deal within the development policy coherence framework. The resolution states that «the Government will consider issues relating to migration and immigration more coherently from the perspective of development policy. It aims to support the positive effects of migration and prevent harmful effects, especially trafficking in human beings, prostitution, and other crimes associated with illegal immigration» (Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2004: 25). Migration is therefore recognised as a development issue and, if properly managed, it is also considered to contribute to development (*ibid.*). Within this policy framework there are however no guidelines on how to engage Finnish-based diaspora groups in development activities in the country of origin, nor is there a governmental-level policy on diaspora engagement. The engagements and cooperation that do exist thus take place within broad development cooperation policies and funding mechanisms. This can be seen in the light of Finnish integration policies, which are based on the ideals of an egalitarian welfare state, i.e. on the aim to integrate and 'equalise' all its members. From this perspective, Finland does not have a differentiated structure for diasporas, but the aim is to integrate them into existing systems.

The access of diaspora groups/organisations to existing funding structures has been facilitated by the pro-activity of diasporas themselves. Somalis in this regard are among the most active groups in Finland in approaching external actors, making Somalia-related issues visible. Somalis are the fourth largest immigrant group in Finland after Russians, Estonians and Swedes, and the largest group of immigrants originating from Africa (Statistics Finland 2007). In 2008 Finland had a community of 10,647 people who spoke Somali as a mother tongue, of which 6,352 were born in Somalia (Statistics Finland 2008, out of this figure 3,346 are men and 3,006 are women).

An illustrative example in the Finnish case is the access gained by a number of Somali diaspora organisations to funding from the NGO development unit of the MFA. This funding for NGO development projects is divided into small-medium size CSO/NGO project support and large NGO programme support.<sup>56</sup> The total share for support to NGO development, one of nine development cooperation

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<sup>56</sup> In 2010, 11 native Finnish NGOs have a partner organisation status. The total share of funding for partner organisations is over half of the whole budget for NGO development cooperation. Organisations apply to get this status in open calls for proposals.

budget lines, represented some 12.7% of the total yearly budget in 2008.<sup>57</sup> Development cooperation carried out by NGOs complements Finnish multi- and bilateral cooperation as well as the EU's development cooperation. The overarching objective of NGO development cooperation is to further the UN Millennium Development Goals and to strengthen civil society in developing countries. A total of some 200 Finnish NGOs is currently involved in implementing development cooperation projects in over 80 different countries, or in sharing information on topics related to development.<sup>58</sup> An indication of the activity of the Somali diaspora and its rather extensive level of networking with external actors compared to other diaspora groups in Finland comes from the NGO development unit at the MFA, which during the past years has received a large number of development project applications from Somali diaspora organisations but only very few from other diaspora groups (such as Kurdish, Ethiopian and Ghanaian organisations). The first development project carried out by a Somali association obtained external funding from the MFA in 2000. In 2009 a total of 141 small or medium size CSOs and 10 MFA partner NGOs were granted funding. Out of these, ten were Somali organisations and the absolute majority native Finnish NGOs/CSOs.<sup>59</sup> It is however important to stress the funding criteria of the NGO development unit of the MFA: there is no 'Somali quota' thus all project proposals of all NGOs/CSOs are evaluated on the same basis and those with the best project proposals and organisational capacity get funding.

The problem from the MFA's point of view has been the low capacity of the Somali diaspora organisations in terms of management, reporting and their more general ability to follow the demanding bureaucratic procedures required in the running of their associations, in writing good quality applications and in realising development projects. The MFA has however directly contributed to support the capacity building measures for Somali organisations by funding the Finnish Somalia-Network.<sup>60</sup> The MFA was not involved in the establishment of the network that was founded in 2004 by a few Somali and native Finnish NGOs/CSOs working towards development in Somalia in order to improve the quality of development cooperation of associations working in Somalia, as well as to produce and exchange information on issues relating to Somalia. Since its setup and until 2009, a native Finnish NGO – a partner organisation of the MFA with several development projects in Somalia – functioned as coordinating organisation for the Network. In 2004 the board of the Network met with officials from the MFA and a project proposal was submitted. The proposal was approved and the Network has been receiving funding from the MFA for the period 2005-2010.

In 2010, the Network had 27 member associations (25 Somali and two native Finnish ones). This figure shows that not all Somali associations have joined the Network, based on an estimated number of 40-50 functioning Somali associations in Finland (Pirkkalainen 2009). The Finnish Somalia-Network arranges courses and training, events and discussions. The Network registered itself as an association in 2009, and in 2010 an executive director (a native Finn with a long research

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<sup>57</sup> Source: MFA, NGO development cooperation website. See [www.formin.fi/Public/default.aspx?nodeid=15339&contentlan=2&culture=en-US](http://www.formin.fi/Public/default.aspx?nodeid=15339&contentlan=2&culture=en-US).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> These numbers have been estimated by the author by going through the names of organisations in the list of NGO development projects funded in 2009 (Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2009). On the basis of the authors' familiarity with them, Somali organisations and native Finnish CSOs/NGOs were easily identified. The MFA does not differentiate diaspora associations and native Finnish NGOs in the selection processes.

<sup>60</sup> See [www.somaliaverkosto.net](http://www.somaliaverkosto.net).



background on Somalis) was appointed in order to strengthen the Network and search for future funding. Financial support for an additional three year period was recently refused by the MFA, as the initial funding provided was seen as temporary in nature and the MFA states that it does not have a suitable funding mechanism for ongoing support to this kind of network. The future functioning of the Network therefore remains an open question.

The network has recently started cooperating with the Finnish Refugee Council in a project for the capacity building of immigrant associations (*Järjestöhautomo*). The aim is to make a training plan for each member organisation in the network and carry out training to improve the functioning of associations. The *Järjestöhautomo* project is creating a system of certificates to associations: each association fulfilling the requirements set for the certificates can then use them in project proposals to show that the association is run in a professional manner.

General training open to all NGOs and CSOs on development cooperation project management, reporting and proposal writing is also provided directly by the Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA) and some Somali associations outside the network have participated in those. The network is much appreciated by the member organisations and many state to have greatly benefitted from its trainings. Some Somali associations outside the network, however, are suspicious of it. The MFA perceives it as a central network for capacity building, as well as for facilitating cooperation among organisations working in Somalia.

#### Initiatives at the intergovernmental level

The IOM Regional Office in Helsinki has previously been implementing temporary return programmes for qualified nationals, such as the project “Return of Qualified Afghans from Finland”. The first project within the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) framework that the IOM Helsinki office coordinated was a pilot project: “Strengthening the Health Sector in Somaliland and Puntland through the Engagement of Somali Diaspora Health Professionals from Finland”. This one year project was launched in 2008 for the engagement of Somali health professionals. Preparation for the pilot had been taking place for years and the Somali diaspora in Finland had been active in promoting the idea, which again indicates the importance of the pro-activity of diasporas. The project coordinator at the IOM is of Somali origin. It was funded by the MFA unit for East and West-Africa. In addition to the MIDA health project, the IOM in Finland also takes part in a joint UNDP-IOM project: “The Qualified Expatriate Somali Technical Support – Migration for Development in Africa (QUESTS-MIDA)”. The purpose of this project is «to tap into key technical expertise among the Somali diaspora in a bid to help rebuild key governance foundations in parts of the country». It targets «Somalis with professional expertise in policy and legislation, human resources management, and public financial management living in North America, the UK and the Nordic countries».<sup>61</sup> The IOM office in Finland started the outreach work for this project among Somalis in the Nordic countries in autumn 2009.

#### Initiatives of Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organisations

Finland together with other Nordic countries have a very high number of voluntary associations compared to many other countries in the world (see Siisiäinen 2008), and also immigrants, in particular refugees, have been active in establishing voluntary associations (Saksela 2003, Pyykkönen 2005). This large number of voluntary organisations makes it impossible to provide an exhaustive list of initiatives between diaspora groups/individuals and native Finnish NGOs. In the Somali case, in addition to Somali diaspora associations accessing MFA NGO

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<sup>61</sup> Source: IOM, Regional office in Finland. See: <http://iom.fi/content/view/226/8>

development project funding, at the NGO and CSO level two-way recruitment and cooperation processes were identified: Somalis bringing their project ideas to native Finnish CSOs/NGOs, and large development NGOs recruiting Somali diaspora individuals on a professional basis (which was facilitated, to some extent, also by the pro-activity of diasporas). On the one hand, some individual Somalis have been unwilling to create their own associations and have chosen an alternative path to access funding from the MFA under the NGO development funding line. They have therefore initiated, or brought their project idea to an existing Finnish NGO. The first project of this kind started in 2003. On the other hand, large development NGOs have adopted diaspora recruitment strategies, although this is a rare phenomenon. An example of this kind is offered by Finn Church Aid, which initiated a project to support traditional and religious leaders in peace processes in Somalia. The project, started in 2008, is carried out in Somalia by Finnish Somalis who have been selected to carry out the work on the basis of their qualifications and expertise. Finn Church Aid however does not perceive this as being a diaspora project in a sense that it is not run in partnership with a diaspora organisation. Local institutions in Somalia are the formal project partners, and activities are carried out together with the Danish Refugee Council. Within the funding institution, the MFA, this particular peacebuilding project is considered important and innovative – being the only of its kind – but it has not come without scepticism from some members of the Somali community in Finland.

Alongside the experience of Finn Church Aid, six native Finnish NGOs or small CSOs that have engaged individual Somalis in their development or peace projects in Somalia were also identified. This sort of recruitment strategy was found in particular in small, voluntary-based CSOs, as they see an added value in engaging diasporas in their work. In many cases the active native Finns in these organisations affirm that without Somalis they would not be working in the country at all – not only for security reasons but also for the sake of local contacts. The case is different for larger professional development NGOs that have international branches and local offices in developing countries and thus do not necessarily see the same added value in working with diasporas. For example in one case a Somali individual approached a large development NGO in Finland with a project plan in Somalia, but was not involved in the actual planning and running of the project. In this case the implementation of the project was done through the local branch of the NGO in Somalia.

In the Finnish case current examples of engagement of diasporas in development and peacebuilding work in all identified levels are to a large extent facilitated by the pro-activity of certain groups, as there are no general policies or specific guidelines on how diasporas should be engaged, nor specific funding mechanisms for diaspora projects. It is thus up to each group to get their voice heard and enter the mainstream structures and institutions. Although Somalis stand as one of the most visible groups that have entered some of their initiatives into mainstream development cooperation, they are still a minor actor in development and peacebuilding. It is difficult to assess whether the lack of policies and diversified funding structures for diasporas in development has been a deliberate choice, or whether it has to do with the short immigration history and comparatively small number of migrants in Finland, coupled with the fact that migration-development issues fall in between the mandates of the MFA and the Ministry of the Interior.

### 3. Critical factors for constructive diaspora engagement

Taking stock of the policies and initiatives that have been put in place in the different countries considered, the pages that follow contain a critical review of some of the factors more often mentioned as favouring or hindering constructive interaction and partnership between diasporas and external actors in peacebuilding. Alongside broader considerations regarding the general 'migration-development' climate, other issues are discussed that emerged as being particularly relevant across all the countries considered. These refer to difficulties in dealing with the fragmentation of diaspora groups, in identifying the optimal form of diaspora-third party collaboration and in assessing the effective added value of engaging diasporas as peacebuilding partners.

#### 3.1 Policies and instruments for diaspora engagement

The country case-studies illustrated above clearly show that a wealth of initiatives is ongoing which, in different ways, encourages collaboration between diasporas and external parties in activities that can contribute to peace processes in the countries of origin. The European countries considered, however, also show that the opportunities available for diasporas to become partners in peacebuilding fall largely under the broader policies and measures put in place in the field of migration-development. In this sense, the countries analysed present very different levels in the definition of explicit policies for the active engagement of diasporas in development. This not only proves a different sensitivity towards providing room for diaspora initiative, propositions and creativity, but it also strongly shapes the effective opportunities that exist in practice for interaction to take place between external actors and diasporas in the field of peacebuilding.

In Italy, for instance, the absence of policies on the issue of migration-development at the level of central governmental authorities is responsible for the total lack of homogeneity within existing approaches on how to engage diaspora organisations. Despite few exceptions,<sup>62</sup> diaspora engagement dynamics in development (and peacebuilding) are often framed within 'pilot projects' developed in a total vacuum of explicit institutional guidelines and declared strategies towards diaspora groups. At the opposite extreme, the case of the Netherlands exhibits a long tradition of attempting to link migration and development cooperation policies, accompanied by various dedicated policy memoranda. This commitment at the governmental level benefited from an active level of interaction with diasporas also at the level of civil society and non-governmental organisations. In addition, the existence of a common policy across different institutional ministries and divisions has favoured the activation of a number of collaborations with diasporas that fall more specifically in the peacebuilding field. In recent years a number of highly relevant migration-development policies have been developed also in Norway. Whereas there is little to no explicit government policy and practice on engaging diasporas in peacebuilding, existing documents do refer to diaspora groups and individuals coming from conflict regions. As noted also in the case of Germany, however, the recentness of Norwegian policies and of most ongoing initiatives currently make it too early to indicate what impact they might have on opportunities for diaspora engagement. A trend observed in Norway, moreover, is that initiatives to mainstream migration-development thinking have been initiated largely on the political level and trickled down onto NGOs and CSOs. The government of Finland, recognises migration as having a potential to contribute to development, but it has not elaborated any guidelines on how to actively engage Finnish-based diaspora groups. The engagements and cooperation that do take place can be seen to

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<sup>62</sup> For instance at the local level, as in the case of the Province of Trento.



reflect Finnish broader integration policies, as the aim is to 'include' diasporas in existing structures and funding mechanisms. This being the case, the pro-activity of diaspora groups has to some extent facilitated migrants' access to the development agenda.

Notwithstanding different forms and levels of national engagement in the development of dedicated policies, the overall picture is that of an extremely lively field, in which governments (national or local) are investing in migration-development. Despite this general wealth of initiatives in diaspora engagement, however, «[t]he existence of institutions targeting Diasporas does not necessarily guarantee that resources and capacities devoted to diaspora policies are sufficient and sustainable» (Ionescu 2006: 37). In most of the country cases analysed within DIASPEACE access to funding and the existence of capacity building measures for diaspora organisations are the two main instruments further facilitating cooperation between them and external parties.

In most cases, diaspora organisations access funding through existing, rather than tailor-made programmes. This situation is extreme in the case of Finland, where Somali diaspora organisations have been found to compete with native Finnish NGOs/CSOs in accessing MFA NGO development project funding. In this context, the integration of diaspora groups into Finnish society becomes a key, as in order to access funding they need knowledge of how to navigate the Finnish system and capacity to fulfil complex bureaucratic requirements. This requires considerable efforts in terms of time, commitment, motivation, resources and networks, thus making access to external funding for diaspora groups very challenging. In addition, the provision of resources to cover the 'own funding' share (15% of the whole project budget) makes the realisation of projects even more challenging for diaspora organisations. Most organisations receiving funding under this budget line are, in fact, native Finnish NGOs and the amounts received by Somali organisations are a very small portion of the overall budget. Similarly in the Norwegian case, an analysis of Norad's lists of applicants and funding for small-scale support between 2007-2010 (Erdal and Horst 2010), indicates that longer-existing mechanisms for obtaining funding through regular channels have been very difficult to access for diaspora organisations.<sup>63</sup> Despite the many assets diaspora members bring with them, in fact, language issues, lack of sufficient knowledge about the Norwegian development cooperation system, and lack of organisational experience are some of the challenges they meet. Fieldwork in Germany also confirmed that in most cases, bureaucratic and institutional prerequisites to obtaining funding are still too high especially for smaller migrant organisations to succeed when competing with other NGOs and CSOs. Especially when applying for government sponsored funding, organisations have to provide a minimum amount of own resources and the sums are often too high for small voluntary migrant organisations to deal with. For this reason, these opportunities are usually only viable for long-standing and well-organised migrant organisations. In this context funding lines that are designed taking into account the particular requirements of less experienced or smaller migrant organisations by offering smaller budget lines and ongoing advice, such as the GTZ pilot programme, present an innovative approach to addressing this challenge. The situation of access to funding appears somewhat easier in the Netherlands. Here, in fact, diaspora organisations mainly access funds through the co-financing system open to Dutch-based civil society organisations, which is tailored for small-scale organisations and initiatives (be they diaspora or not). Although making it comparatively easier for diasporas to access funds, this system

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<sup>63</sup> Out of 83 applications from 21 different countries (of which 8 from Somalia, 3 from Ethiopia and 2 from Eritrea) 17 were funded (including 2 Somali and 1 Ethiopian organisation).

however comes with the risk of relegating diaspora initiative to the small-scale and inhibiting their role as potential partners in larger development and peacebuilding actions. The authors of a research on diasporas as development agents in the Netherlands conducted a few years ago, for instance, observed that «Dutch aid agencies are placing increasing emphasis on support to migrant and refugee organisations ('self-organisations'). However, the focus of this support is financial, aimed at training and coaching, not on fostering the participation of diasporas in the activities of mainstream aid organisations» (Groot and Gibbons 2006: 446) and therefore «genuine involvement of diasporas in mainstream Dutch development aid is limited. Currently, diasporas are considered as 'resources' or 'tools' for the development of their countries of origin and not as genuine partners» (*ibid.*: 448).

Emplacing channels for diaspora to access funding is not the sole measure to facilitate their active engagement in development and peacebuilding work. The research data confirmed that building the capacity of diaspora organisations is also a widespread priority in most countries. In the Netherlands, the provision of small-scale grants for civil society initiatives under the Linkis system is accompanied by training and other capacity building measures that are often tailored to the specific needs of diaspora actors. In addition, many training initiatives have been observed in the Netherlands and in Germany that focus specifically on technical skills that are relevant for peacebuilding, rather than focusing exclusively on the more traditional issues of project and organisational management. Also in the Finnish case the existence of a capacity building measure for diaspora organisations is a strongly enabling factor. The Finnish Somalia-Network, created by Somali and native Finnish NGOs, has contributed to the development of the capacity of Somali organisations and facilitated cooperation. This network is the only one of its kind and can claim several achievements: first, it has brought together Somalis from different regions of Somalia; second, the trainings have raised the capacity of member Somali associations, as reflected in the growing number of Somali associations accessing funding from the MFA; and third, increased trust between Somali associations and the MFA as well as between Somali associations. MFA officials clearly see the process of associations becoming more professional over the years and they recommend organisations that are refused funding to join the Finnish Somalia-Network in order to improve their capacity before applying again. However, as the funding from the MFA for the Network has only been temporary and is ending in 2010, the sustainability of the Network is yet to be seen. The Dutch, German and Finnish cases just illustrated prove that a response is being given to the need for a more systematic guidance and tailor-made service to help diaspora organisations during all project stages. Elsewhere, this need has been registered but is not yet addressed. In Norway, for instance, although the Bistandskolen initiative was pointed out as being positive it is currently unable to cover all of diaspora organisations' needs and there is therefore still a great lack of training opportunities properly tailored to diaspora individuals and organisations. Also in the Italian case there is growing and widespread recognition for the need to support diaspora organisations in terms of empowerment and capacity building initiatives delivered in the country of settlement. In spite of differences in the setup of available capacity building measures, the same difficulties in this sense are largely faced by diasporas in the countries considered that call for trainings to target migrants as a group with special needs. In particular, insufficient language proficiency makes it difficult to follow seminars that, for example, provide guidelines for funding application procedures. Also, full-time jobs, families to take care of etc. limit the time that can be spent on acquiring the knowledge needed and complicate the organisation of events and trainings that need to be planned during evenings or weekends. In the German context, several interviewees additionally pointed out that training and networking activities should ideally be organised on the sub-regional level to make

sure that interested diaspora representatives could participate without having to travel long distances. Meeting these demands, however, requires flexibility and additional commitments also on behalf of external parties. Finally, different cultural backgrounds often mean that participants are not used to the 'way things work' in the development world of the countries of residence. Encouraging diaspora participation in the development field has the benefit of creating diversity, but that benefit has limited meaning if there is a rigidity in trainings on how to do things right. As such, training sessions have to find a balance between teaching people to comply with requirements in order to be eligible for assistance, and leaving space for diversity and different ways of doing things.

The wealth of initiatives observed in the countries considered within the DIASPEACE research shows that a conducive migration-development environment in the countries of residence is essential to create the basis for diasporas to fully participate in the development of their countries of origin, thus engaging in activities that can also contribute to peace and reconstruction processes. As recently underlined by de Haas, wide empirical evidence currently available shows that the development impacts resulting from migration are controversial, thus revealing «the naivety of recent views celebrating migration as self-help development 'from below'. These views are largely ideologically driven and shift the attention away from structural constraints and the vital role of states in shaping favorable conditions for positive development impacts of migration to occur» (de Haas 2010: 227), meaning that governments have a decisive role in channelling the potential of migration into positive development achievements. This statement holds particularly true when the specificities of conflict-derived diasporas and their opportunities for engagement in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts are concerned. As discussed in the introduction to this paper, in fact, diasporas can notoriously also have a degenerative impact in conflict-characterised settings. The case-studies presented in this paper show that, little (if any) attention is paid to monitoring these factors during collaboration.

In addition to uncovering the importance of existing policy frameworks for diaspora engagement and of ongoing initiatives to facilitate access to funding, training and assistance for diaspora organisations, DIASPEACE fieldwork also shows that many initiatives are dependent on the active engagement of a few extremely dedicated individuals in governmental and non-governmental sectors. This is a cause for concern as, combined with high staff turn-over, it makes migration-development policies and practices highly vulnerable.

### **3.2 Diasporas as fragmented actors**

Alongside the professional capacity of diaspora organisations, which is greatly addressed by investing in capacity building measures and by favouring access to project funding, an issue of widespread concern among external actors wishing to establish collaboration with migrants lies in the fragmented nature of diaspora groups.

Especially when cooperating with diaspora organisations from conflict-regions, their levels of fragmentation as well as politicisation are a major cause of preoccupation. The Somali case is just one relevant example of a high degree of fragmentation, which reflects divisions along regional and clan affiliations, as well as along generational, religious, political and gender lines. The Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora also appear to be strongly affected by both fragmentation and politicisation. These divisions within diaspora groups may be the result of a transferral of the conflict from the country of origin, a factor that can threaten the peacebuilding potential of their actions. Research conducted in Italy found that, according to the convenience of the interlocutor, fragmentation is sometimes denied and sometimes treated as a taboo that is enshrined in the culture of the

Somali people. The adoption of similar attitudes on behalf of diaspora groups clearly makes it extremely difficult for external actors wishing to approach them to understand who they are dealing with. In most of the countries considered, in fact, understanding who the organisations represent is voiced as a major concern by governmental institutions, NGOs and CSOs, who find it difficult to identify who to trust and, ultimately, who to cooperate with. Because of fragmentation among the diaspora, moreover, there is a perceived threat that cooperation may easily become politicised. While fragmentation and politicisation are of course legitimate concerns, this should however not lead to the conclusion that diaspora actors cannot be partners in development (Erdal and Horst 2010: 10). Research undertaken on diaspora mobilisation for homeland development and peacebuilding within DIASPEACE, in fact, has shown that the Eritrean, Ethiopian and Somali diaspora do make crucial contributions to the lives and livelihoods of people in the countries of origin (Warnecke 2010). It should, however, be underlined that diaspora organisations from the Horn of Africa are more often found to contribute to peacebuilding processes in an implicit way, by promoting development and fighting exclusion, thus indirectly addressing the root causes of the conflict. When collaboration is established with third parties, however, this general focus on development rather than peacebuilding objectives may encourage the latter to ignore the factors behind the conflict and to expect the diaspora to solve these issues internally ahead of establishing collaboration. This is a risky path, as it means that external actors may become blind to how conflict and divisions in the country of origin may reflect also in the diaspora.

The fieldwork collected in the countries covered by the research largely confirms that for «external actors, it is crucial that individuals and organizations they support are seen as legitimate actors by the migrant communities they represent» (Horst 2008: 2). In the case of absence of clear interlocutors among the diaspora, in fact, there is a risk that only few successful individuals are able to gain direct access to key people in governmental and non-governmental organisations. If these brokers use their position to deny access to others, their position becomes one of great power (Erdal and Horst 2010). In many countries, the distribution of resources among diaspora groups on behalf of donors has also proved extremely delicate, particularly when they originate from conflict or post-conflict countries. In such cases, «attempts to support diaspora organizations often display a rather literal approach to the issue: The major parties to a conflict are identified and resources are then distributed equally between organizations representing those parties» (Horst and Gaas 2009: 4). More often, however, there is an explicit preference for collaborating with umbrella organisations that are able to represent larger networks and disseminate information among their members. In Germany, for instance, governmental authorities both on the local and regional levels have supported or even initiated efforts to form African umbrella associations. In its latest policy memorandum on migration-development, the Dutch Government also openly states its willingness to support the creation of umbrella organisations.<sup>64</sup> Co-Financing Agencies such as Oxfam and Cordaid, moreover, have played an important part in favouring the establishment of unifying networks and platforms among the diaspora resident in the Netherlands, particularly through the commitment to a shared thematic goal.<sup>65</sup> The Finnish Somalia-Network can also be recalled as an attempt to deal with fragmentation in Finland by bringing together different organisations

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<sup>64</sup> See the country section on the Netherlands of this paper (p. 19).

<sup>65</sup> The case of the Multicultural Women Peacemakers Network (MWPN), which brings together diaspora women from different nationalities with an aspiration to contribute to peacebuilding processes in their countries of origin offers a particularly fitting example.

working in different parts of Somalia. In order to facilitate cooperation and information sharing, the politics of Somalia have deliberately been excluded from the network's agenda that focuses, instead, on development work/humanitarianism as a bridging theme. The clear identification of unifying common goals has been recalled by many interviewees across the countries examined as one of the key elements leading to the success, rather than the failure, of these network experiences. Alongside the already cited case of the MWPN in the Netherlands, another positive example encountered in Finland is IOM's MIDA Health Somalia project. In this case, divergent views on regional and political fragmentation have been reduced by focusing on the common cause of health needs in the country and a common professional field. Less successful attempts to establish network organisations were observed in Germany, Norway and Italy. In NRW, the African diaspora umbrella organisation Afrikanischer Dachverband NRW e.V. has strongly suffered from internal conflicts and has been criticised by some as having been initiated top-down rather than on the basis of grassroots initiatives and needs. Similarly in Italy, the only attempt by the Italian MFA to engage the Somali diaspora for peacebuilding resulted in a failure, as funds were distributed to the members of an externally-driven umbrella organisation, therefore legitimising one group at the expense of others. Interestingly, the Italian case also offered few examples of organisations exhibiting a mixed membership, composed by Somali diaspora individuals in addition to people with other backgrounds as well as Italians. In these cases, the variety of the organisations' membership is perceived as offering new opportunities and as overcoming the divisions occurring within Somali diaspora organisations.

The picture just outlined suggests that to expect the diaspora to solve their internal divisions as a pre-condition for collaboration is misleading, especially when the aspiration is to work together with them in conflict settings.

### **3.3 Collaboration: with whom and how?**

The considerations made so far show that collaboration with the diaspora is frequently conceived in terms of interaction with migrant *associations* and that a strong emphasis is placed on providing the latter with support to implement their own projects. Evidence from the country profiles presented above, however, also shows that relevant interaction between diaspora and third parties is in fact far more varied, both in terms of the type of diaspora actor with whom collaboration is established and in terms of the content and nature of the collaboration itself. The range of possible types of cooperation is shaped firstly by the diverse nature of diaspora organisations. The data collected within DIASPEACE shows that diaspora initiatives can be established at different levels, ranging from professional networks, to community initiatives, to migration-development associations, to umbrella and network organisations.<sup>66</sup> Alongside the diverse nature of these associative initiatives, moreover, the possibility for third parties to engage diaspora *individuals* should also be taken into account.

Fieldwork has also shown that peacebuilding-relevant processes of interaction with the diaspora can take many forms, ranging from consultation processes during the formulation of policies and programmes, to the provision of financial and other support to the projects initiated by diaspora organisations, to the inclusion

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<sup>66</sup> An attempt to identify a typology of diaspora initiatives geared towards development that can assist external actors in partnering with relevant diasporas is offered in Ionescu (2006). The characteristics that diaspora organisations should bear to be suitable partners specifically in peacebuilding, based on earlier DIASPEACE research, is explored in Sinatti (2010). The same topic is also touched upon by Zunzer (2004).



of diaspora in existing projects, to the joint running of projects, as well as to the recruitment of diaspora individuals on behalf of mainstream NGOs.<sup>67</sup>

Consultation processes with the diaspora have recently become increasingly popular in some European countries, as a way of rationalizing development policies (Ionescu 2006: 24-25). The case of the Netherlands shows that consultations in the definition of migration-development policies provide the opportunity for migrants to identify their potential role and to voice their opinions in a participatory manner. According to Libercier and Schneider, consultation of this form «at first allows actors to become aware of their complementarity and can subsequently make their initiatives more consistent, effective and lasting» (1996: 62). Again in the Netherlands consultations take place also in the definition of development policies towards specific countries, therefore gaining a strong peacebuilding relevance when the countries at stake are characterised by conflict. Similarly in Norway various units within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are open to meetings with diaspora members, organise seminars and at times consult diaspora members. Alongside these formal initiatives, a number of more informal consultation processes were observed in Italy and Finland, where rather widespread contacts exist between the Somali diaspora and Italian/Finnish politicians and institutions. In Finland, for instance, many Somali groups and individuals are actively lobbying on issues concerning Somalia with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which is open to meetings with diaspora members. Evidence from this country, moreover, shows that the diaspora can be consulted also in project formulation. The most notable example is provided by the IOM MIDA programme “Strengthening the Health Sector in Somaliland and Puntland through the Engagement of Somali Diaspora Health Professionals from Finland”, the initiation of which was characterised by a strong diaspora pro-activity. From IOM’s point of view, the commitment and motivation on behalf of many health professionals of Somali origin, who had been promoting the idea for many years, was an essential starting point justifying an engagement in the project.

Collaboration between diasporas and external actors is more explicit in the case of partnerships either supporting the projects implemented independently by diaspora organisations, or by jointly running projects initiated by one or the other party. In this sense, the country case-studies analysed confirm that partnership is more often mediated through the civil society sector and very rarely entails a direct involvement of government institutions. Although the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway<sup>68</sup> and Finland are providing direct financial support to diaspora organisations, their numbers are still extremely limited. In Italy, a few cases of local authorities attempting to directly promote a ‘partnership’ modality when approaching diaspora organisations have resulted in successful collaborations with the Somali diaspora in Regione Toscana, in the city of Milan and in Trentino. More often, however, public authorities view native development associations as ‘trustworthy’ and having the capacities as well as the legitimacy to work in the migration field. The result is that Italian NGOs often speak in the name of migrant organisations, thus generating a *crowding out effect* of the latter on matters of their concern (Caponio 2005, Mezzetti and Guglielmo 2010). Similarly in Norway, many NGOs perceive that despite the government’s declared commitment to ensure that the particular competence of diaspora groups is utilised (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009a: 101), implementation is largely left to the civil society sector. Especially the larger

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<sup>67</sup> See also de Haas (2006: 4) for an attempt to list the different ways in which migrants can be involved in development policies.

<sup>68</sup> In Norway this direct relationship is channelled through Norad, which, being a directorate under the MFA, Development Cooperation, is however a government agency.

Norwegian NGOs consider the push to cooperate with diasporas as a burden that does not necessarily fit their mandate. Small voluntary organisations, instead, seem to engage more willingly with the diaspora on the basis of strong personal and religious motivations. Likewise in Finland some small, voluntary-based CSOs have been approached by Somali individuals who expressed a desire to bring their project idea to an existing native Finnish organisation. In these few identified cases, cooperation was based on tight and trusted personal relationships between native Finns and Somalis. The degree of joint involvement in the actual project implementation varies strongly across these cases, as well as in similar ones observed in the Netherlands. The Care/NedSom Diaspora Partnership Programme, for instance, stands out as an example of a well balanced participation of both parties in the running of a project.

Field data shows that fruitful forms of collaboration between diasporas and third parties may also be established beyond the limited time-frame imposed by project-based cooperation. Whereas in Norway, Germany and Finland there is still an extreme under-representation in ministries and NGOs of employees who have a migrant background, in other countries it was observed that migrants are being incorporated as workers in mainstream development organisations. In the Netherlands, a number of external actors have adopted staff diversity policies in the belief that a strong multicultural and multi-religious community within an organisation facilitates the crossing of cultural bridges also when working in development and peacebuilding in the field.<sup>69</sup> In Italy native NGOs recruited Somalis and consolidated relationships with them already during the major humanitarian crises occurring in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These relationships continued during the Somali civil war when Somali officers became essential human resources for Italian NGOs' activities in Somalia. At that time, Italian NGOs hired Somalis, enabling them to become development and humanitarian workers, many of whom are still employed in this sector or act as 'key informants' on the Somali crises. Also in Finland, although examples are rare, the peace building project in Somalia carried out by Finn Church Aid has hired qualified Somali individuals to carry out work in the field. Similarly within the MIDA health programme mentioned earlier an individual of Somali origin has been recruited on a professional basis in the role of project coordinator. In both these projects the pro-activity of diasporas has facilitated the realisation of projects. Although some might criticise these recruitment practices as threatening the independence of diaspora voices, in the long-term this strategy has also proved valuable in enhancing the professional capacity of the diaspora. In the Netherlands, in particular, cases exist of individuals gaining professional capacity within established organisations prior to founding independent diaspora associations. This has not only allowed to enhance the diaspora's capacity to set up and run development organisations in a professional way, but it has also allowed strong and historically grounded strategic alliances between organisations to become established.

In more general terms, efforts to promote cooperation between government institutions, NGOs and CSOs on the one hand and diaspora individuals and organisations on the other are increasingly common across the countries considered. Although different countries present different levels of active engagement in this area, «the concept of networking now runs through nearly all current international migration programmes» (Smith and van Naerssen 2009: 20). In many countries, moreover, a certain degree of self-initiative is expected on behalf of diaspora groups (de Haas 2006). In this sense, it should be underlined that diaspora organisations studied within DIASPEACE do not passively wait for external parties to reach out to them and have, in fact, shown a high level of pro-activeness. When it comes in particular to actions in the field of peacebuilding, however, the input of

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<sup>69</sup> This finding contrasts with the results of an earlier study of migration-development in the Netherlands by Groot and Gibbons (2006).

external third parties can be a hugely facilitating factor. Not only, in fact, situations that will stimulate opposing parties to work together, to overcome conflicts and to identify the grounds for the definition of shared goals can be initiated more easily from the outside, but external organisations with an established track record in peacebuilding are also in a position to deliver their knowledge and experience to diaspora organisations. Finally, the diversity of collaboration forms observed in the countries analysed suggests that «there can be no simple or single way to implement this collaboration» and that the latter «must be continually ‘reinvented’ in practice» (Libercier and Schneider 1996: 12). Each country should therefore explore its own models, depending on the nature of diaspora and non-diaspora actors present on the scene, as well as on locally available opportunities and resources. Most importantly, however, the data collected shows that effective diaspora engagement in peacebuilding is more often the product of a long-lasting relationship of collaboration, allowing to test appropriate working modes and to establish relationships of mutual trust.

### **3.4 Diasporas in peacebuilding: assessing the added value**

Despite an overall wealth of attempts to establish collaboration with diasporas in development and peacebuilding efforts, the DIASPEACE research also observed a certain lack of clarity – on behalf of third parties – of what the relative added value might be. Even when policies and mandates mention a commitment to work with diasporas, the added value is rarely explicitly identified. Exemplary in this sense is the Policy memorandum on migration-development adopted by the Dutch government, which recognises migrants’ potential while also suggesting that migrants themselves «could do more to identify their own potential added value» (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008: 55). This quote reflects a strong burden that is frequently placed on the diaspora to prove itself and to take responsibility in revealing and realising its own potential. When it comes, more specifically, to peacebuilding this general uncertainty on the specific value added of diaspora participation is even more evident.

This picture at the organisational and institutional level is contrasted on the one hand by the personal opinions expressed by individuals working within them and, on the other hand, by research-based evidence on the numerous advantages of engaging diasporas in peacebuilding uncovered within earlier DIASPEACE research. Many individuals working for the external actors consulted, in fact, articulated a variety of positive views on diaspora participation, on the basis of the opportunities they have personally experienced. Some informants mentioned the richness that diversity in general creates and the benefits in terms of language and culture, others the possibility to access otherwise inaccessible areas, others that engaging diasporas falls within a broader commitment to the empowerment of local communities that is the basis of a long-term development vision. External actors wishing to support private initiatives in development and peacebuilding (such as through the Linkis system in the Netherlands) even suggested that diaspora organisations are more motivated to work in fields and in countries that are unattractive for other civil society actors. Numerous small or middle-sized organisations, especially those with solidarity work included in their mandate, also see potential in working together with the diaspora.

Earlier research conducted within the DIASPEACE project further substantiates these claims as it uncovered a number of ways in which diaspora engagement in peacebuilding does represent an added value that are worth briefly recalling here.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Horst and Gaas (2009), Pirkkalainen and Abdile (2009), Warnecke et al. (2009) and Warnecke (2010).



Diaspora ties with their countries of origin are generally at the basis of a strong *affective capital* (Ionescu 2006) made of emotional commitment and personal motivation to contribute to home-country advancement.<sup>71</sup> Migrants also dispose of knowledge on cultural practices, demands and current developments, meaning that individuals with a diaspora background can participate more effectively than other actors in peacebuilding processes. In these cases, in fact, «people in the homeland are more accepting and willing to listen to advice from members of the diaspora rather than other foreigners» (Bercovitch 2007: 35), thus enhancing local feelings of ownership.<sup>72</sup> The commitment of diasporas, moreover, is of a long-term nature, a factor that is key in favouring the sustainability of peace processes. Examples of diaspora-run projects have been observed in Finland, Germany and in the Netherlands, in which activities have continued after the end of external funding.<sup>73</sup>

Diasporas are also more likely than other mainstream development actors to think 'out of the box' and advance new and creative ideas on how to promote development and peacebuilding (Horst 2008). There are several examples especially in the fields of reconciliation and post-conflict recovery where migrant organisations have initiated dialogue processes especially on the local levels, including cases of cooperation in the countries of residence with organisations from other countries or with organisations belonging to inimical groups that would not have been possible 'back home'. Migrants and their organisations, moreover, are at times able to harness long-term trustful contacts with regional or local authorities and NGOs in their countries of origin as well as in those of residence. This calls into question the important bridging role that can be played by diasporas. DIASPEACE data has revealed that the Somali community in particular has pursued an explicit network-building strategy, allowing Somali organisations to develop working relations beyond the local sphere and to act trans-nationally as well as trans-locally. In addition, residence outside the country of origin has allowed the diaspora to gain relevant competences and skills that can be transferred to the country of origin. Return projects for qualified nationals observed in Finland and the Netherlands have allowed the Somali and Ethiopian diaspora to play a pivotal role in long-term reconstruction processes of their countries.

The strong local nature of diaspora ties with the home-country, often established in the region of origin at the family and grassroots level, puts diaspora initiative at risk of being biased in the selection of the most needing beneficiaries. On the basis of strong local ties, however, migrants are also more likely to have access to the more isolated regions of a country, an asset that is particularly relevant in conflict situations. Evidence from the Somali diaspora, in particular, has shown that diaspora organisations are in a key position to deliver aid to Somalia, as they can operate in places that are inaccessible to international actors.<sup>74</sup> The small and local scale of diaspora driven initiatives often also makes them more cost-efficient, as

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<sup>71</sup> These commitment and motivation, moreover, have proved to remain equally strong in times of crises (Weiss Fagen and Bump 2006).

<sup>72</sup> Although the opposite has also been said to be true in a number of cases. An example from the Ethiopian diaspora is illustrated in Koser (2007).

<sup>73</sup> Although in some cases these projects are recent and longer term sustainability is therefore difficult to assess

<sup>74</sup> The rise of extreme Islamist groups of Al-Shabab in Central South Somalia has, however, also restricted access to certain areas. Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporas also suffer from limited access to their countries of origin should be mentioned. In Ethiopia, in particular, the recent 'Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies' prevents organisations that receive more than 10% of their funding from abroad from engaging in human rights and advocacy projects. This law, introduced in 2009, seriously affects activities promoted also by the diaspora.

they rely on lighter structures when compared to the internal management costs imposed by larger NGOs.<sup>75</sup>

These abilities of diaspora organisations can surely be regarded as a resource to be strengthened and used to the benefit of development processes in their countries of origin. The effectiveness of diaspora contributions to peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts, however, also clearly depends upon the specific elements of each situation and these conditions can be subject to change over time. A clear example of this comes from the Italian case, where NGOs that had previously recruited Somalis among their permanent staff do not currently see an added value in involving more recently arrived Somalis into their development programmes, because they see them as bearers of personal interests with a desire to exploit the NGOs' resources for their personal/clan profit. Returnees who lived for a certain time in Italy and have returned to Somalia, instead, have established organisations there through which they maintain ties and collaborations with Italian NGOs, who see them as 'trustworthy' partners with 'bridging' potential. There is, therefore, a greater need to assess the specific added value that collaboration with the diaspora entails on a case-by-case basis. A diaspora member, in fact, should not be automatically regarded as an expert and knowledge of the country of origin needs to be complemented with knowledge and skills regarding conflict and peace. A particular concern is expressed by many external actors that the diaspora carries biased opinions of the conflict in the country of origin. A joint involvement between the diaspora and external actors in peacebuilding, in this sense, will be beneficial to both parties as well as to the target country itself. By collaborating, the outsider positioning of external parties can counter the insider one of diaspora organisations and hence minimise the associated negative effects. Collaborating in this way allows both parties to strengthen each other's weaknesses, thereby resulting in a meaningful collaboration.

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<sup>75</sup> Interestingly, larger NGOs consulted within DIASPEACE use the same argument of cost-efficiency and economies of scale in favour of their own projects.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

Four main policy recommendations can be drawn from the case material and discussion presented in the previous pages.

### a) Be politically engaged

Research conducted within DIASPEACE has shown that diasporas have a strong tendency to organise and mobilise themselves for the advantage of their countries of origin. Fieldwork among external actors collaborating with diasporas has nonetheless also shown that their engagement is highly favoured by the adoption of clear policies and measures favouring diaspora engagement at the national level. *Clear migration-development policies* overcome a vacuum and contrast the pulverisation of efforts undertaken in absence of shared guidelines and principles. Internal policy coherence also plays a key role in creating an enabling environment, as responsibilities for issues relating to migration, development cooperation and peacebuilding often fall in between mandates and are distributed across different ministries and bodies. Good communication should also be established between all the different actors on the scene (including those at the institutional, as well as at NGO and CSO level). Coordination between these parties will favour the complementarity of interventions, avoiding overlapping and duplication of efforts. Good coordination might also contribute to overcoming the risk of competition between diaspora organisations over limited available resources. Coherence, communication and coordination can however only be achieved through long-lasting and durable commitment and by integrating co-development strategies also with direct agreements signed with migrants' countries of origin.

Policy frameworks on their own have limited impact if they are not followed by measures and instruments facilitating partnership with the diaspora. Many countries have devised small-scale *funding schemes* accessible to civil society and/or diaspora initiatives, combining them with comprehensive *capacity building measures* providing support and advice structures as an instrument for migrant organisations to test, practice and build their management and implementing capacities. The joint combination of these two tools no doubt represents a winning strategy, however requiring significant resources in order to make a critical difference. Most countries, in fact, lament the scarce reach of existing resources and tools compared to potential needs. In addition, building the capacity of diaspora organisations is exposed to the danger of patronising, as it may push them to 'speak the same development language' as their third party counterparts. This may indeed make collaboration easier, but it may also suffocate opportunities for exploiting the huge potential for innovation, creativity and thinking 'out of the box' that diaspora organisations carry with them. Policies and initiatives should therefore also take stock of the wealth of existing migrant engagement in development and peacebuilding and muster an effort on behalf of third parties to 'mobilise themselves' (de Haas 2006, Horst 2008) to engaging with diasporas also in alternative ways. Finally, policies and measures should set realistic prospects and avoid expecting migrants to succeed where NGOs and other development cooperation actors have already failed. The «limited success of much development practice so far» has in fact led to the rising «hope that migrants may be able to overturn current developmental failures and foster development» (Raghuram 2009: 103-104).

### b) Be realistic

While policies and measures generally relating to migration-development can favour cooperation with diasporas also in peacebuilding, collaborative actions in this field must take into account a number of additional challenges.

The fragmentation that characterises diaspora groups, particularly those originating from conflict-affected countries, is notoriously an issue of concern among external actors. Engaging diasporas for effective peacebuilding and

reconstruction requires third parties to *learn more* about the context in the country of origin and the specificities of the diaspora in the country of residence prior to seeking a joint engagement. More importantly, the unrealistic expectation of working with a homogeneous diaspora must be overcome and modalities identified that allow to *acknowledge the diversity of diaspora views* and interests. Observed attempts to encourage the formation of diaspora networks and platforms may be questioned as being the best solution to deal with diaspora fragmentation. Should the umbrella nature of diaspora organisations become a requirement for collaboration with third parties, in fact, there is a strong risk of these organisations becoming externally induced. Evidence, in fact, has shown that the most successful of these cases are based on a good deal of diaspora initiative and ownership in the process, as well as on the identification of clear shared themes along which networks and platforms are constructed.

### c) Think innovatively

Third parties have shown to be currently working with diasporas in an extreme variety of ways. Whereas the most conventional form of collaboration is still largely associated with external actors' support to diaspora-initiated projects, many alternative forms of interaction have the potential to have a lasting impact on peacebuilding processes. Interested third parties should therefore be more explicitly creative in the *nature and contents of collaboration*. The latter can take the variable form of consultation for policy and programme definition, incorporation by way of recruitment, donor-receiver relation, full partnership in joint project implementation, the construction of longer term strategic alliances, etc. The possibility, moreover, should also be explored of *looking beyond diaspora organisations* when identifying relevant partners. Collaboration, in fact, can be sought in more creative ways, for instance attempting to incorporate diaspora informal networks or individuals. Diversifying the diaspora interlocutors with whom collaboration is sought might even assist in overcoming some of the challenges posed by diaspora fragmentation. In addition, the fact that many diaspora organisations operate at the transnational level and are able to mobilise resources relying on broader networks than those of external actors may require the latter to explore new approaches to collaboration (Horst 2008). This statement calls for a greater openness also in the contents, as well as in the forms, of possible collaboration. It would be presumptuous, on behalf of third parties, to expect the diaspora to adapt to existing ways of doing development and peacebuilding without showing a willingness to explore new avenues. This would allow to better harness the potential for innovation and alternative ways of understanding development and peacebuilding that the diaspora might bring forward.

Whichever form collaborations might take, the DIASPEACE research has shown that the most fruitful examples are rooted in long-term processes that expand beyond the timeframe of specific collaboration/partnership on a single project or initiative. It is essential, therefore, that mutual trust is built through good communication, regular exchange, consultation and networking opportunities. It is essential that trust is built both ways, both on behalf of external actors who need the time and resources to identify and invest in adequate diaspora partners, and on behalf of diaspora organisations who need to find assurance that external actors can be equal and valuable partners. Diaspora engagement, in this sense, can be touted as a sign of breaking the unequal structures of development cooperation, transforming its 'objects' into 'actors'.

The need to identify strategies to handle diaspora fragmentation as well as the variety of ways in which collaboration might be established both call for external actors to be flexible and open to negotiation in collaborating with diaspora actors.

d) Critically assess the value added of engaging diaspora

Lastly, an effective collaboration with diaspora requires a clear *assessment of the unique added value of the diaspora in peacebuilding*. Diaspora organisations should not be left to identify their potential alone. Better alliances should be built to favour the exchange of experiences in a way that can truly assess the value added on a case-by-case basis. Although the DIASPEACE research has already made huge progress in unravelling the complexity of diaspora's role in peace and reconstruction processes in the Horn of Africa, detailed knowledge of these issues should be more easily accessible also to development actors and diaspora groups operating in the field. Despite the fact that many opportunities already exist for exchange of information, there is a greater need for these to constructively assist diaspora and external parties in identifying conditions for success. This can more easily take place when discussion is organised around clear issues, be they defined geographically (on specific countries or regions) or thematically (on peacebuilding-relevant topics). In particular, the ways in which different collaborations and actions can directly address the root causes of conflicts must be identified, taking into account both cross-cutting elements and factors deriving from the nature of the partnership and/or that are country-specific. Similar opportunities for learning lessons and establishing best practices would also mitigate the risk of diaspora engagement in peacebuilding becoming a purely theoretical advantage and leaving the associated difficulties taboo.

The DIASPEACE research has revealed many ways in which diasporas originating from the Horn of Africa successfully contribute to peacebuilding processes. The project has also explored the opportunity that this wealth of initiatives represents for other development and peacebuilding actors, who could partner with diasporas in an effort to better promote peace and reconstruction in war-torn countries. It is a hope that the insight into country policies and experiences, together with the recommendations contained in this paper will offer interested external parties with valuable suggestions for action.



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