



THE EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE CONFLICT OVER NAGORNO-KARABAKH



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About us

The European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK) is a unique initiative that seeks to positively impact the conflict settlement process in Nagorno-Karabakh. We work with local partners in the South Caucasus on a wide range of innovative peacebuilding activities to contribute to lasting peace in the area.

“At first, I did not think and even imagine this project would change something in me – not just something, but the views on some things that are important to me. It’s very hard to renounce your beliefs or even to understand that some of your beliefs are not true, but you know, I’m glad that there has been such a transformation in my subconscious.”

Ashot and Marina

Our partnership – a European civil society initiative – comprises five member organisations: Conciliation Resources (UK), Crisis Management Initiative (Finland), International Alert (lead agency, UK), the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (Sweden) and LINKS (UK). The current partnership builds on previous work that our five member organisations carried out in this field, individually or in groups.

Through this dynamic partnership, we seek to build mutual understanding of and confidence in the settlement process – essential ingredients for any sustainable and peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Our main goals

Our main goal is to support the transformation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through a range of peacebuilding efforts. To achieve lasting peace, people must believe in the peacebuilding process and in its legitimacy. We strive to increase confidence in peacebuilding efforts by focusing on the following main goals:

- Increasing people’s participation in peacebuilding initiatives, especially marginalised groups;
- Building confidence and trust between all sides of the conflict through increased contact between people;
- Encouraging fresh analysis and new ideas that challenge existing thinking on the conflict and seek to promote peace;
- Encouraging civil society to play an active part in the dialogue with policymakers at national and international levels on how to transform the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in a peaceful way.

What we do

Building peace is a complex process, involving many obstacles and differing positions. We aim to bridge these differences by encouraging dialogue between societies across the conflict divide. Those taking part in the dialogue include a broad range of Armenian and Azerbaijani policymakers, media and civil society – including those in and from Nagorno-Karabakh.

We carry out our work through a wide variety of practical peacebuilding activities, for example:

- Advocacy and dialogue with governments and other stakeholders;
- Public policy debates and moderated discussions;
- Peacebuilding courses and workshops;
- Documentary films and public film screenings;
- News journals, reports, policy papers and studies on conflict-related issues;
- A news website focusing on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and settlement process;
- Comparative conflict studies and visits;
- Cross-conflict training courses and networking for journalists;
- Photography/arts exhibitions and events.



ABOVE: Roundtable on peaceful coexistence, Baku, 2011

Member organisations and their work

The EPNK initiative consists of five member organisations, whose combined knowledge and expertise make up a dynamic partnership.

Conciliation Resources

Conciliation Resources supports local people in many different walks of life to have a voice in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. We do this through the following initiatives:

- Dialogue Through Film – we support local media organisations to produce independent reporting, analysis and coverage of the conflict. We work in cross-conflict formats, bringing young Armenians and Azerbaijanis together to learn about filmmaking across closed borders. We also work with professionals, creating visible symbols of cooperation between public figures in the cultural sphere. See, for example, the 2012 film *Memories Without Borders*, a Turkish-Armenian-Azerbaijani joint documentary exploring legacies of unresolved violence (www.c-r.org/MWB);
- Displaced communities – we help local partners in Azerbaijan to invest in activism among displaced communities, to enable them to participate more effectively. We have created new links between Azerbaijani and Georgian displaced communities;

“This film is important because it makes us question why there’s so much hatred between us. The characters and the stories in the film were natural and touching. They made me think again about how I see the people on the other side.”

Audience member, Armenia

we are also supporting research on the needs of displaced Armenians;

- The Karabakh Contact Group – we support this group, which brings together experts and activists from all sides to think creatively about shared problems. We have issued briefings on justice for displaced communities and on the thorny issue of whether and how to engage with unrecognised entities;
- *Analyticon* – we support this independent political monthly, published in Nagorno-Karabakh. Covering the peace process and regional politics, it is also the only magazine in the territory regularly publishing contributions from Azerbaijani journalists.

Crisis Management Initiative

Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) aims to challenge the impasse in the peace process by reaching out to the group most affected by the conflict – young people – through a unique multi-level dialogue. CMI’s initiatives in this area include:

- Providing opportunities for young leaders from all sides of the conflict divide to meet and better understand each other and their societies’ needs;
- Supporting young people to create and implement local confidence-building initiatives in their own societies – this is aimed particularly at the younger generations, who have no personal experience of co-existence before the war;
- Arranging meetings between youth and local and international officials to inform the official peace process.

Such initiatives aim to create public support on all sides for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In 2013-2015, there will be a particular focus on developing joint confidence-building initiatives between young leaders on different sides of the conflict divide.

International Alert

As the lead EPNK member organisation, International Alert seeks to generate alternative perspectives and fresh discourse on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through its comparative learning programmes.

Working towards this aim, Alert supports key groups of local actors involved in shaping public opinion to develop alternatives to radical conflict discourse. These groups include mainstream media and the expert community:

- Mainstream media – by engaging mid-career journalists and editors in a series of joint residential conflict study programmes, we help them to develop professionally, build relationships across the divide and learn from peacebuilding in other conflict contexts. They then share their insights through major local media agencies, allowing ordinary people to see how victims of other conflicts have managed to rebuild trust and live beside former enemies in peace;

“The peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups until recently at war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the best example for the South Caucasus of the search for a common future that rejects the interests of external powers and seeks exclusively common interests.”

From an article by a participant in the journalists’ study programme

- Expert community and civil society leaders – by enabling expert analysts and civil society leaders from across the conflict divide to research mechanisms for addressing conflict-related issues in other contexts, we help them to share this research with local communities in remote regions as well as major cities. This encourages wider discussion around new peacebuilding approaches to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

“The fragmented nature of peacebuilding projects is one of the reasons behind the lack of effectiveness of peacebuilding as a whole in the Nagorno-Karabakh context.”

From a joint publication by the expert group

Alert has also supported the development of a joint publication analysing civil society peacebuilding initiatives in the Nagorno-Karabakh context after 20 years of peacebuilding. Focus groups and individual interviews conducted for this research have helped to engage wider civil society in looking back as a starting point for discussion of experience from other conflict contexts.

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation

The Swedish Foundation Kvinna till Kvinna (‘woman to woman’) supports Armenian and Azerbaijani women’s organisations to promote women’s empowerment and participation in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process (based on the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security).

Kvinna till Kvinna believes that a sustainable peace process must involve civil society and the equal participation of women and men.

How we make a difference

The peace process has so far failed to achieve a long-expected and much hoped for breakthrough. The rhetoric coming from both government and societies across the conflict divide has been increasingly polarised and highly charged, making our work more difficult.

We strive to meet these challenges through our partnership and innovative approaches to peacebuilding, which seek to make a difference and focus on peace by:

- Creating an independent civil society framework for European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to engage with the Karabakh conflict;
- Bringing together young people, women, displaced people, civil society activists, policymakers, journalists and filmmakers from around the region and offering different means for dialogue and interaction – the key aim here is to build relationships and confidence across the conflict divide;
- Promoting a gender-balanced approach across all our activities;
- Structuring our work in a flexible manner, so that it can evolve quickly in response to the broader regional dynamics. Our activities, while mutually reinforcing, are freestanding, and member organisations often use different approaches to achieve a common objective.

The Foundation's initiatives in this area include:

- Supporting four local women's organisations that work together to strengthen young Armenian and Azerbaijani women affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, so they can play a more active part in peacebuilding efforts and influence decisions that affect their lives. An important component is giving opportunities to young women divided by the conflict to meet and share experiences, fostering solidarity between women;
- Training local women and girls on how to promote women's rights in the peace process;
- Communicating to local and international decision makers the message that women are important actors for peace and should be recognised for their peacebuilding work, also that they should be included in decision making that shapes the future of their societies;
- Using its findings to inform policymakers and diplomats – specifically, the 2012 EU-funded report *Equal Power - Lasting Peace*, which includes an analysis of the obstacles to women's participation in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process.

“We have discussed a lot with young women the issue of gender roles. They say that the predominant social norm is that politics is a male domain and that women should be passive. But after our seminars, the young women said that they were ready to be part of all processes related to solving the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Rena Tahirova, a member of the Azerbaijan Feminist Group of the Yuva Humanitarian Centre

LINKS – Dialogue - Analysis - Research

LINKS contributes to a broader understanding of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in a wider regional and international context through constant engagement with the international community. It achieves this through its publications and through briefings to governments and institutions, within the EU and beyond.

RIGHT: Displaced Azerbaijani youths, Baku, 2013

LINKS' contribution to the EPNK project includes:

- Producing since 2011 the online journal *Commonspace.eu* in Russian and English – a daily news portal informing societies in the South Caucasus of different views and opinions on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and of other important developments in the region. The journal also helps to air alternative views that may contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and to a better understanding of the issues that underpin it (see www.commonspace.eu). The website is complemented by a popular Facebook page (CommonSpace) and Twitter feed (@commonspaceEU);
- Producing a quarterly analytical report *CommonspaceExtra* – a publication providing in-depth analysis of the conflict and the peace process by and for analysts, policymakers and diplomats, putting the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in a wider regional context;
- Maintaining regular dialogue with the governments, parliaments and political forces in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the de-facto authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh, the displaced community of Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh and other stakeholders from across the conflict divide – to contribute to new ideas on and approaches to the conflict's resolution;
- Challenging stereotypical positions and encouraging broader strategic thinking – through articles and interviews in the mainstream media in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and through participation in roundtables, conferences and events throughout the region.



EPNK themes

Our work focuses on the following themes:

Dialogue: We see dialogue as an essential part of building peace and therefore use it in much of our work. Dialogue can help people from across the region to develop themselves and to promote change in their societies by engaging with counterparts with vastly differing perspectives on the conflict.

Research and analysis: Our research and analysis aims to challenge the lack of fresh thinking and to offer new ideas on and approaches to the peace process. Our evidence helps people to re-examine the key aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in a new and more positive way. It also instils greater confidence and awareness in civil society actors to engage in dialogue with policymakers on conflict-related issues.

Film and media: We use film and media in a number of unique ways to help build mutual understanding between polarised Armenian and Azerbaijani societies. Our media projects aim to raise awareness of issues around the conflicts, challenge stereotypes of the other side and facilitate discussion between different groups. We engage leading journalists, filmmakers and opinion shapers to help interpret conflict-related events in a more nuanced fashion. Films reach our audiences through targeted screenings with specific groups and through the internet.

Participation and inclusivity: We work to include new and more diverse groups in the peacebuilding process and to give a voice to marginalised groups. These groups include young people, women, displaced people, civil society activists, experts, policymakers, journalists and filmmakers.

We also aim to support a peace process that is inclusive of diverse perspectives, analysis and ideas. We seek to empower civil society actors to take part in the discussion on the conflict, leading to fresh analysis and new ideas on the conflict, with peace as the main goal.



ABOVE: *Making Memories Without Borders*, Nagorno-Karabakh, 2011

Training and capacity building: We organise tailor-made training courses, retreats, public roundtables, lectures and seminars in the region to strengthen societies and to empower the groups with whom we work. The training and capacity building aspects of our work focus on:

- Filmmaking and the roles of media in conflict contexts for young Armenians and Azerbaijanis;
- Conflict sensitivity and analysis for journalists and editors, as well as opportunities to learn from other conflict contexts and peace processes;
- Improved understanding of peacebuilding among young people and women, enabling them to play a more active role in their local communities.



For more information about our work, please visit www.epnk.org or email info@epnk.org.

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK) and its members; they should under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the EU.

COVER IMAGE: Displaced Armenian couple, Nagorno-Karabakh, 2012

