

July 12, 2016



Mark Fodor
Executive Director, CEE Bankwatch Network
Na Rozcesti 1434/6
190 00 Praha 9, Czech Republic
main@bankwatch.org
mark.fodor@bankwatch.org

Werner Hoyer
President, European Investment Bank
98-100, boulevard Konrad Adenauer
L-2950 Luxembourg
Luxembourg

Dear President Hoyer,

Cc: Management Committee, Board of Directors

Safe Space for Participatory Development

The European Investment Bank has repeatedly acknowledged the importance of participation, good governance, and accountability for development. As both human rights and development experts have noted, respect for human rights of freedom of expression, assembly, and association is crucial for achieving participatory, sustainable, and accountable development.

Unfortunately, in many EIB client countries, these rights are under attack, from violent crackdowns on protests and criminalization of speech, to arbitrary arrests and detention of human rights defenders, as well as restrictions on civil society organizations (CSOs). Global Witness identified 2015 as the worst year on record for killings of land and environmental defenders, with 185 killings across 16 countries¹. This environment of violence, intimidation, and closing civil society space renders meaningful public participation in development virtually impossible. It also significantly increases the risk that EIB-financed activities will contribute to or exacerbate human rights violations.

Today, over 130 civil society organizations from around the world launched the attached statement on the “Responsibility of International Financial Institutions to ensure Meaningful and Effective Participation and Accountability within their Investments, and to Foster an Enabling Environment for Freedoms of Expression, Assembly, and Association.” The statement is available at http://rightsindevelopment.org/?page_id=4691

The statement lays out seven concrete ways European Investment Bank and other development finance institutions can support an enabling environment for public participation and ensure that their activities do not cause or contribute to human rights violations. A live version of the statement together with case studies and supplemental information is available at <http://www.rightsindevelopment.org/HRD>

We believe that European Investment Bank has a responsibility to ensure that the activities it finances respect human rights and that there are spaces for people to participate in the development of EIB - financed activities and hold the Bank to account without risking their security.

We know that the challenges of closing civil society space and threats to human rights defenders may be new to the EIB. However, as these challenges are growing more acute day by day, we urge you to devote the necessary resources to grapple with them in a serious and effective manner. We are eager to work with you and to bring the technical expertise of human rights institutions, human rights defender organizations, and other relevant experts to assist you in understanding these issues and identifying effective means to address them.

We therefore request the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience. Please contact me for more information or for scheduling purposes.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Mark Fodor', written in a cursive style.

Mark Fodor, Executive Director, CEE Bankwatch Network

¹ <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/reports/dangerous-ground/>