

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

CIFAR.EU



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CiFAR – Civil Forum for Asset Recovery e.V.,

Köpenicker Str. 147, Berlin, Germany

cifar.eu



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OVERVIEW

Three years since we were founded, 2019 saw a large number of important developments and successes for CiFAR. In the last year of our 2016-2019 strategy, we continued to grow and consolidate our organisation; expanded our networks; and provided civil society, practitioners and journalists worldwide with a number of new tools to investigate corruption and advocate better on asset recovery.

Globally, 2019 was a year of significant developments on asset recovery. An increasing number of governments stepped up their efforts to return stolen assets and investigate corrupt officials, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria, Kenya and Angola taking the lead. More, large money laundering schemes emerged and continued to expose the role of the Global North in hiding dirty money and in particular financial institutions and service providers. While governments in the North are slowly introducing stronger anti-money laundering regulations, Brexit cast a shade on the UK's efforts to fight financial secrecy and its future as one of the largest safe havens for corrupt money worldwide. As in previous years, in 2019 journalists and activists worked bravely to uncover new corrupt schemes, facing increased risks in more and more places around the world.

In 2018, a key focus for CiFAR had been to expand our networks and understand the needs and opportunities of civil society from the Global South to work on asset recovery. In 2019, we dedicated much energy to provide these organisations, journalists and stakeholders with new, qualitative and useful tools to understand asset recovery, conduct better investigations and formulate reforms of key international asset recovery structures. We looked at a key international player and yet little-known safe haven for illicit financial flows, Germany, assessing its role in asset recovery, identifying potential cases and suggesting reforms, which were taken up by German government officials.

We looked at the EU corruption-related sanction system applied on Ukraine, Tunisia and Egypt, discussing with policy-makers how this system can be made more efficient and accountable. We created new tools for civil society, including asset recovery country profiles and a database of persons subject to EU sanctions. Finally, in 2019, in consultation with international and local NGOs from the Global North and South, we developed global principles on how we think asset returns should be made accountable and transparent, which will be used to advocate nationally and globally.

Internally, CiFAR continued its sustained growth. We increased our multiannual income with a total available budget of €92 thousand, hired new staff, collaborated with several volunteers, and expanded and updated our internal policies and structures to ensure more transparency and accountability. Externally, CiFAR gained significant visibility thanks to the new tools and knowledge we developed.

2019 was the last year of our 2016-2019 Strategy. This year, we looked back at our first period of existence at CiFAR, reflecting with partners on our successes and where we still need to grow. We looked at our direction in the next future, consulting with international partners and experts on priority areas and opportunities. Our Strategy 2020-2023 will be ambitious, and we are excited as ever to grow even more and continue working with civil society to step up our work on asset recovery.

We wish to thank our supporters in 2019 and those who believed in us and look forward to an exciting 2020.

The CiFAR team



Capacity building

RA 1: Developing the expertise, knowledge and skills of non-state actors to play an effective role in the asset recovery

This results area is designed to address the lack of expertise and/or knowledge in non-state actors, in particular civil society organisations and investigative journalists, in the complexities of theft of public assets and international asset recovery process.

Through developing the expertise of non-state actors, this results area is also designed to strengthen the expertise of governments in preventing asset theft and in the recovery of stolen assets, through enabling civil society to provide the blueprints for reform and to provide informed and constructive advice to government officials.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

RESEARCH

- » Stolen asset recovery between Germany and developing countries
- » Misappropriation Sanctions in the EU
- » Topic Guide on Illicit Financial Flows
- » Country Profiles

TOOLS

- » Principles and Standard Database
- » Assessment methodology for GFAR Principles
- » EU Sanctions Watch Online tool

RESEARCH

2019 has been a prolific year for CiFAR in producing new knowledge and analysis on asset recovery, cross-border corruption and illicit financial flows. Our research was and is conducted in a way that they can be immediately used by civil society and governments to advance the most pressing challenges around asset recovery. During the year, we published **four studies** looking at asset recovery cases, country assessments and international policy analysis, in addition to other research.

In collaboration with GIZ, CiFAR produced a comprehensive study about the role of [Germany as international actor in asset recovery with developing countries](#). The report identifies up to 36 cases of illicit assets in Germany, provides in-depth analysis of six of those cases and identifies needs and entry points for technical assistance of German development cooperation on asset recovery. We received positive feedback from high-level officials in Germany during the launch event of the research, with some indicating that they are willing to discuss with us on asset recovery reform and which we will follow up on in the coming months and years.

We also conducted a comprehensive, expert analysis of the current [EU misappropriation sanctions](#) regime, freezing assets of individuals from former regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Ukraine. Supported by NED, the study analyses the effectiveness of this system as a tool against cross-border corruption and asset recovery, showing that its success in recovering stolen assets has been very limited and the application of these sanctions have been inconsistent and opaque.

Building on our strategic objective to strengthen the [role of civil society in asset recovery](#), we also published a study looking at how CSOs can and are engaging in this topic in five countries in collaboration with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Through examples and case studies, the report outlines how civil society can and is contributing to the tracing of stolen assets through independent investigations, ensuring the transparent and accountable use of assets once they are returned, and helping the public make sense of the complexities involved in cross-border corruption and asset recovery.

Additionally, CiFAR produced a [topic guide on illicit financial flows](#) in collaboration with Transparency International, introducing the current global debate, best practices and challenges in the fight against illicit financial flows.

As part of ongoing support to NGOs to work more strongly on cases, we collaborated with the Nigerian organisation CISLAC to develop an initial [methodology to assess the implementation of the Global Forum for Asset Recovery \(GFAR\) principles](#) in Nigeria. The tool was used by our partner to prepare a report highlighting failures and successes in the Nigerian government in making asset recovery more transparent, accountable and effective and was picked up by other NGOs globally to prepare similar assessments.

ONLINE TOOLS

In addition to policy analysis and research, in 2019 we focused on providing civil society and journalists with new online tools to support their investigations and work on asset recovery. Linked to the research on the EU sanctions regime, we launched [EU Sanctions Watch](#), an online tool collecting and visualising information about the sanctions regime and the individuals from Tunisia, Egypt and Ukraine subjects of the EU sanctions.



With the help of their corrupt networks, kleptocrats steal billions from their citizens every year. The European Union has imposed misappropriation sanctions against high level officials and other people suspected of corruption to freeze their assets.

SANCTIONED PEOPLE BY COUNTRY

EGYPT TUNISIA UKRAINE

We are documenting the people under these sanctions and analysing sanctions as a tool against corruption.

SEE SANCTIONED PEOPLE

EU Sanctions Watch

We also launched [Country Profiles](#), a new section of our website that for the first time anywhere provides an assessment of national asset recovery frameworks and cases, covering seven countries in 2019.

Finally, we also launched a [Principles and Standards Database](#), which collects information and data about international principles and best practices on various asset recovery related topics, such as returns, human rights, sanctions and civil society's role.



Country Profiles

CAPACITY BUILDING

During 2019, we kicked off two new important projects aiming to strengthen the capacity of civil society in asset recovery: a training programme for NGOs in four key asset recovery countries – Moldova, Mexico, Mozambique and Kenya and a new edition of Investigate, our training programme for young investigative journalists from Western Balkans, North Africa and Western Europe, both of which will be continued in 2020.

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We also held a workshop on illicit financial flows with over 20 journalists and activists during a European event on transnational corruption and organised crime in Berlin, organised by Mafia? Nein Danke.



Capacity building: Moldova



Networking

RA2: Enabling stronger cross-border cooperation of non-state actors to fight against state asset theft and for asset recovery

This results area is designed to address the difficulties civil society, investigative journalists and other non-state actors face in working on asset recovery outside their national context. While State asset theft is a global issue, networks and advocacy to end this practice tends not to be. Through expanding networks against asset theft, this results area is designed to lay the groundwork for increasing cross-border

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- » CSO-policy maker event on sanctions in Brussels
- » Holding a civil society-policy maker event on Germany and asset recovery
- » Engaging in civil society asset recovery coalitions
- » Speaking and participating in international asset recovery and anti-corruption events

BRINGING TOGETHER CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLICYMAKERS

In two events, we brought together international civil society, experts and policymakers to discuss the results of our research and the needs and opportunities

In **Brussels**, we organised a workshop on the future of the EU corruption-related sanctions in collaboration with Transparency International EU, attended by over 80 participants including officials from the Parliament, Commission, and CSO representatives from within and also outside the EU.

In **Berlin**, in cooperation with GIZ we gathered over 30 experts and stakeholders to discuss the role of Germany and German development agencies in asset recovery, attended by over 30 experts and stakeholders.



EU Sanctions Event / Brussels

NETWORKING AT INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

We visited a number of **real estate and luxury good events** in Germany and Europe during 2019. At one of these events, in Germany, we held a panel on sanctions and introduced our new Sanctions Watch tool. The aim of these was to better connect with companies that are on the front line in working with potentially corrupt officials, provide them with information on requirements to comply with EU sanctions rules and connect them to the tools we developed for EU Sanctions Watch.

We also participated in various **international conferences**, including the OECD Integrity Forum, the Europe Institutional Forum in London and the Europe-Africa Asset Recovery Dialogue. The latter of which we spoke on a panel and represented the views of civil society, as one of only of 2 CSOs invited, alongside TI France.. The aim at these was to build connections and contribute to discussions on asset

WORKING GROUPS

We continued our participation in the **civil society working group** on Uzbekistan. This group aims to coordinate a civil society response to the ongoing returns process to Uzbekistan and to ensure that the voices of independent Uzbekistan civil society are heard in this process. We also continued to be a member of the UNCAC Coalition's working group on asset recovery.



Campaigns & Advocacy

RA 3: Building strong, multi-country campaigns to challenge the impunity of individuals for state asset theft and to challenge the structures that allow for assets to be stolen and moved abroad

This results area is designed to bring together and amplify the voices of non-state actors to challenge the foundations of asset theft and to hold accountable those who are involved. We will seek to push governments to take action against the asset theft chain, to make it more difficult for private institutions to facilitate and accept stolen assets and to empower those who support our cause.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- » Development of Accountable Asset Return Principles
- » Online and media presence

ACCOUNTABLE ASSET RETURN PRINCIPLES

Building on the work from previous years, we led a network of NGO groups to develop a set of 10 [Civil Society Principles for Accountable Asset Return](#). These principles are designed to be a framework through which joint advocacy on individual cases of asset recovery can take place. We plan to use these principles in our own work with key decision-makers and support civil society organisations to use them to assess the work of their governments when returning and re-using stolen assets.

ONLINE AND MEDIA PRESENCE

Over the year, we engaged over 10,000 visitors on asset recovery through our website, doubling our numbers from previous years. We produced ten blog articles, covering topics around EU sanctions, Nigerian asset return, grand corruption and asset recovery in Sub-Saharan Africa, Germany, Moldova, Ukraine and Investigative Journalism.

CiFAR also was present in international media, including several articles about EU Sanctions and an interview with the CiFAR team about the role of civil society.

Our online impact

- » 22.672 people reached through Facebook posts
- » 10.835 unique visitors on CiFAR's website and subdomains
- » Tweets earning an average of 3.000 impressions a month
- » 136 Facebook posts
- » 10 blog articles on our website



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Support us: cifar.eu/support-us/
Contact us: info@cifar.eu