

Federal Ministry of Finance
Minister Markus Marterbauer
For the attention of the Minister and his Cabinet
Johannesgasse 5
1010 Vienna, Austria

Vienna, 5 October 2026

Protecting Global Europe in the MFF 2028 to 2034

Dear Minister Marterbauer,

We ask you to protect the financial capacity and budget share of the Global Europe Instrument in Austria's negotiating position on the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028–2034. We recognise the pressure to consolidate budgets. Development cooperation, humanitarian assistance, civilian peacebuilding and development education nevertheless require reliable resources if the EU is to prevent crises and sustain effective partnerships. Ahead of the European Council on 15–16 October, these priorities need explicit protection in Austria's EU budget mandate.

Global Responsibility (AG Globale Verantwortung) represents 39 Austrian NGOs working in development cooperation, humanitarian assistance, civilian peacebuilding and Global Citizenship Education. Our members implement around 1,000 projects in 120 countries each year with local partners, and undertake education and public engagement in Austria. We bring their practical experience into Austrian and European policy discussions as a member of CONCORD, the European confederation of development and relief NGOs. Our concern is that the next EU budget must sustain both work with communities abroad and informed public participation in international cooperation at home.

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) sets the EU's spending ceilings and priorities for seven years. The proposed Global Europe Instrument for 2028–2034 would bring development, neighbourhood and enlargement financing, humanitarian assistance and other external action into a much broader framework. Decisions on its overall allocation and the safeguards within it will therefore affect all four areas of our members' work. The Council's partial negotiating mandate of 16 June 2026 did not settle the financial envelope. The ongoing MFF negotiations remain decisive for the resources available after 2027.



Protect the financial capacity of Global Europe

We ask Austria to defend the Commission's proposed EUR 200.3 billion for Global Europe over 2028–2034, in current prices, as the minimum financial baseline. We welcome the European Parliament's call for EUR 225 billion. In any revised negotiating box, Austria should also protect the instrument's share of the total MFF and oppose disproportionate cuts to external action. For Heading III, the external action heading as a whole, the benchmark is around 11% of the total MFF. That heading includes Global Europe and other external spending; the two allocations must be kept distinct.

The apparent increase in Global Europe cannot be assessed by comparing its nominal allocation with today's development instrument alone. The new proposal consolidates several existing instruments and responsibilities, while inflation reduces the purchasing power of the seven-year envelope. An overstated increase would provide a misleading basis for cuts. The relevant question is whether the EU will retain the capacity to meet humanitarian needs, sustain development partnerships and prevent violent conflict.

We recognise Austria's difficult fiscal position and its emphasis on efficiency and European added value. Collective external action gives Austria access, expertise and influence that individual national programmes cannot provide at the same scale. Stable partnerships help address crises before their consequences become more costly, support reliable trade relationships and strengthen the multilateral system. Austria's UN Security Council term in 2027–2028 makes the credibility of these commitments particularly relevant.

1. Development cooperation that reduces poverty and inequality

Development cooperation supports people's ability to lead secure and dignified lives through access to health care, education, food, social protection and accountable institutions. These foundations also make societies more resilient to economic shocks, climate change and conflict. Global Europe should retain poverty reduction and the long-term eradication of poverty as the primary objective of its development cooperation, with human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion and climate resilience reflected in programming and monitoring.

Austria should support a binding target of at least 90% eligibility as Official Development Assistance (ODA), with the scope and any exceptions clearly defined and publicly reported. In line with CONCORD's recommendations, at least 50% of ODA should support human development, including health, education and social protection, and at least 50% should reach fragile and conflict-affected states. These targets can overlap: spending on health in a conflict-affected country can contribute to both. Global Europe should also contribute to fulfilling the EU and Member States' collective commitment to provide 0.2% of gross national income in ODA to Least Developed Countries.

Grants must remain central, particularly for essential public services, civil society and countries with high debt burdens or limited capacity to borrow. Global Gateway investment, guarantees and loans should complement grant-based cooperation. Projects should demonstrably advance sustainable development and respond to partner-country priorities, without redirecting scarce development resources towards European commercial interests or migration control. Multiannual allocations, especially for Sub-Saharan Africa and the global pillar, need protection against repeated reallocation.



2. Humanitarian assistance based on needs and humanitarian principles

Humanitarian assistance saves lives and protects people affected by conflict and disasters. Its allocation must follow needs and the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Bringing humanitarian financing into Global Europe makes it essential to preserve a clear, protected allocation, independent operational decisions and DG ECHO's ability to respond wherever needs are greatest. Humanitarian organisations need predictable resources to sustain access and relationships with affected communities.

We ask Austria to secure at least EUR 25 billion, in current prices, for humanitarian assistance over 2028–2034 as a binding, ring-fenced minimum in the regulation and budget architecture. This must be a protected baseline that cannot be diverted to other objectives, with scope for additional funding when needs rise. The baseline should be financed within the non-programmable allocation and must not depend on repeated releases from a reserve shared with other priorities. Annual allocations should remain responsive to needs. Humanitarian action also needs priority access to additional crisis resources, including for sudden-onset emergencies, anticipatory action and underfunded crises.

3. Civilian conflict prevention and peacebuilding

Civilian peacebuilding helps prevent violence, sustain dialogue and address the conditions that allow conflict to recur. It includes mediation, reconciliation, inclusive governance, transitional justice and support for women and young people to participate in peace processes. This work requires trusted local organisations and sustained engagement, including before a crisis becomes visible. Its financing should remain identifiable within Global Europe and protected against displacement by other security or economic priorities.

We support EPLO's recommendation of at least EUR 15 billion for the global pillar as a whole, together with protected allocations for civilian conflict prevention and peacebuilding within it. Peacebuilding also needs adequate geographic programming and rapid funding for new conflicts or opportunities for peace. Conflict sensitivity, informed by regularly updated and gender-responsive conflict analysis, should apply across all Global Europe actions, including investment projects. Support for locally led peace initiatives and cross-border work must remain possible even where cooperation with state authorities is restricted.

4. Global Citizenship Education and development education in Europe

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) helps people understand global interdependence and engage critically with poverty, inequality, climate change, human rights and peace. Through learning and public dialogue, it strengthens democratic participation and the ability to assess decisions made in our name. Our members connect this work in Austria with the experiences and perspectives of partners worldwide. This public understanding helps sustain accountable international cooperation over time.



The Commission's Development Education and Awareness Raising programme (DEAR) supports this work through civil society organisations and local authorities in Europe. It funds educational activities, learning materials, public engagement and campaigning. The proposed Global Europe regulation allows civil society action within the Union but does not secure DEAR as a named programme with a distinct allocation. Relying on a general eligibility provision would leave its continuity and scale exposed to later budget choices.

Austria should therefore advocate an explicit development education purpose and a separate, identifiable DEAR funding stream within Global Europe. The next allocation should at least restore the EUR 151 million initially programmed for 2021–2027 before subsequent cuts, with provision for inflation and transparent reporting. Funding must remain accessible for organisations of different sizes and for formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout life, including independent work on human rights, gender equality, peace and accountability. Erasmus+ and AgoraEU can complement this work; Global Europe should retain its distinct global development education purpose.

Safeguards that allow all four areas to deliver

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus should connect emergency response, long-term development and peacebuilding where doing so benefits affected people. Cooperation must respect each area's mandate, particularly the independence of humanitarian action. Fragility should be addressed across regions and pillars through sustained support for local institutions and communities, preparedness and early warning. Funding should reach people in need even when direct cooperation with a government is suspended.

We support an 80% programmable and 20% non-programmable balance within the geographic and global pillars, with the emerging challenges and priorities cushion treated separately. Predictable programming is needed for lasting partnerships; sufficient non-programmable resources are needed for humanitarian action, conflict response and opportunities for peace. Competitiveness projects should not be eligible for this crisis funding. Decisions to use the cushion or transfer allocations should have clear criteria, public reporting and effective parliamentary scrutiny, including at the mid-term review.

Civil society organisations are independent actors in development, humanitarian action, peacebuilding and education, as well as partners in implementation and accountability. We support CONCORD's call for at least 15% of programmable funding to be accessible to civil society. This requires practical grant access for local and partner-country organisations, proportionate procedures, multiannual partnerships and meaningful participation in programming and monitoring. NGOs and independent media must be able to protect civic space and reach communities when state channels are unavailable.

Migration-related conditionality must not undermine poverty reduction, human rights or access to assistance. Austria should oppose withholding development support as leverage for returns or readmission and protect humanitarian assistance and programmes implemented by independent civil society from such suspensions. Migration-related actions should be rights-based, comply with ODA rules and address people's needs and the causes of forced displacement.



These recommendations draw on the September 2026 joint advocacy positions of CONCORD, EPLO and VOICE and their joint call on fragility, together with the Civil Society Alliance for Global Citizenship Education's MFF recommendations. We work with GCE Alliance partners and are preparing to join the Alliance. They provide a common basis for the four areas of work represented by our platform.

The action we ask of the Finance Ministry

- 1. Protect Global Europe in the overall budget negotiation.** Please defend the EUR 200.3 billion baseline and the instrument's proposed share of the MFF, and resist using external action to absorb a disproportionate part of any overall reduction. Comparisons should account for inflation and the consolidation of existing instruments. European added value should be assessed through results for people and prevention of future costs, as well as immediate national budget returns.
- 2. Turn indicative allocations into dependable commitments.** Please support the protected humanitarian minimum of EUR 25 billion, adequate global and geographic allocations, an identifiable DEAR funding stream and the 80/20 balance for programming and crisis response. These safeguards should be reflected in the MFF agreement and the instrument's financial provisions, with transparent reporting on transfers and results.
- 3. Coordinate the budget mandate with the policy mandate.** Please ensure that the EU budget team led by Valentin Wegerth works with the Budget Section, your Cabinet, the Foreign Ministry and the Federal Chancellery on these priorities. Fiscal predictability and oversight can support effective international cooperation when programme design and financial allocations are considered together.

We would welcome a short discussion with your Cabinet and Department II/2 before the October European Council, particularly on how Austria intends to protect Global Europe in the next negotiating box. We can provide examples of where predictable EU grants and crisis funding enable Austrian NGOs and their partners to deliver results.

Yours sincerely,

Lukas Wank
Executive Director



Member organizations of Global Responsibility

