

Updated Information note to civil society actors on the EU Programming process in partner countries

(Update: October 2020)

The EU is the world's largest donor and also a key political actor, with high influence over global policies and international agendas. The EU also recognises civil society, in all its diversity and multiple roles, as a key development actor and, as such, is committed to political and policy dialogue with CSO partners at the regional and country levels. Therefore, by actively engaging with EU and EU Member States' representatives, you can contribute to influence the EU's role and approach in your country, and seek support on the issues you work on.

The EU is currently reviewing its priorities and allocation of resources around the globe for the 2021-2027 period. This information note presents the process to define these priorities, as well as the opportunities for civil society organisations to take part in these discussions.

The EU has a 7-year budget cycle (called the Multiannual Financial Framework - MFF) which is currently being negotiated for the period 2021-2027. This includes the EU's budget for its external action priorities (under Heading VI: the Neighbourhood and the World). For the 2021-2027 period, the framework defining this funding has the following features:

- Its aim is to "uphold and promote the EU's values and interests worldwide".
- It is organised in one single external instrument covering all foreign policy, international and development cooperation assistance, called "Neighbourhood, development and International Cooperation Instrument" (NDICI).
- The NDICI has been designed to reinforce the policy-driven approach to EU cooperation and international partnerships.
- This instrument will have a strong geographic focus (regional and country level). Geographisation means two things: most funds are disbursed in regions and EUD (European Union delegations) and MS (member states) in countries have a greater role in decision making over priorities and allocations in a given country.
- The instrument will address themes of global relevance, including support to human rights and civil society actors.
- The instrument foresees rapid-response actions in case of unexpected changes.
- It will be complemented by a reserve to be used in a more flexible manner.
- In terms of modalities to implement this instrument, a large share of that budget will be used to subsidise private companies to invest in partner countries, via extremely complex financial instruments.

In line with the above mentioned policy-driven approach, the definition of priorities and programmes has to take into account as much as possible the five European Commission's priorities, set by the new EU leadership at the end of 2019. These are:

Overarching geopolitical priorities of the European Commission



- **Green Deal:** climate change, environment, biodiversity, natural resources management, sustainable energy, food systems (“From farm to fork”), circular economy, green and smart cities and water and oceans.
- **Digital and data technologies:** regulatory standards, digital connectivity, digital skills and entrepreneurship, e-services including e-governance.
- **Alliance for sustainable growth and jobs:** sustainable investment, business environment and investment climate, education and skills, regional economic integration, trade and connectivity.
- **Governance, Peace, Security and Stability:** Human rights and democracy, rule of law and accountability, conflict prevention, sustaining peace and building resilience, fight against terrorism and organised crime.
- **Migration partnerships:** root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, migration management, durable solutions for refugees.

Certain cross-cutting priorities should be applied systematically in international partnerships actions:

- involving **civil society, public and private sector** and financial institutions;
- promoting **gender equality** and women’s empowerment;
- increasing **human capital**.

Multilateralism and promotion of Partnerships is also a transversal priority of the upcoming Commission.

While the document that includes all details and rules governing (also called legal basis) **the new instrument (NDICI) is still to be adopted**, the programming process is advancing.

A- Translating the NDICI into priorities and programmes for the geographic programmes

As mentioned above, the EU is reviewing its priorities and allocations of funds for the 2021-2027 period. This process is called ‘programming’ and takes place in three phases:

1. The **pre-programming** consisted of consultations and an analysis phase carried out by the EU Delegations and Member States (MS) Embassies and agencies present in countries, in the first half of 2020. Its aim was to allow the EU to identify its areas of support in, and with, partner countries. The outcome was a short strategy paper indicating proposed umbrella priorities. In some cases those priorities are then developed into “Team Europe Initiatives” (previously called Flagship Initiatives) which have been elaborated based on proposals from the EU Delegations and further inputs from EU Headquarters (EEAS & DGs DEVCO & NEAR) for the geographic programmes. This phase is complete.
2. We have now entered the **programming phase**, during which the EU will outline detailed priorities for each country or global thematic, as well as which actors or funding modality are best placed to achieve the expected impact. During this phase, **it is crucial to ensure that CSOs have an essential role to play in how EU aid will be implemented**, whether as a direct implementing actor, or as an advocate and/or in a monitoring and watchdog function. CSOs can also help define the priorities of the in-country European development cooperation.

The NDICI programming will take place from September 2020 until the end of the year and possibly all the way to spring 2021. The programming exercise should be an inclusive process encompassing broad and transparent consultations with different stakeholders in the countries - including civil society. Please note that EU Delegations can choose how to manage these consultations in the most appropriate manner.

However, events (online or virtual) with civil society organisations, including youth, are highly encouraged by headquarters.

3. The next, and final step, will be the review and adoption of **Multi-annual Indicative Programmes** for each country or thematic programme where EU external action will be activated.

Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs) are the result of the programming phase. The MIPs set out the priority areas, specific objectives, expected results, performance indicators and indicative financial allocations for each country (and thematic) programme. The MIPs will have a duration of 7 years (4+3) and will be reviewed once during that period.

B- A key moment to engage with EU Delegations and EU Member States in-country

The programming process is a key moment for civil society actors to engage with EU Delegations and the Embassies of EU Member States present in countries, and ensure our analysis, priorities and approaches are taken into account. Below, some proposed steps to facilitate the engagement in the process:

How to engage in the programming process

Reach out to the EU Delegation: Find out 1) What are the outcomes of the pre-programming phase and 2) whether the EU Delegation in your country has planned a consultation with CSOs in the coming weeks. If yes, find out how and when such consultations will be organised. If not, let us know and we will bring this to the attention of DG DevCo at HQ level. Do also put pressure on the EUD to hold an inclusive consultation as this is required by HQ. The contact person is the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation.

NB: You can also check CONCORD's [online monitoring tool](#) which gathers information provided by members and colleagues about consultations taking place around the world. In case you access new information, we strongly encourage you to input to the tool and help us have a better overview of the situation.

Organise yourself: Consult other CSOs and their platforms at the country level and join forces to ensure consistency of your programming advocacy and joint positioning. Collate documentation, assessments, innovative approaches, lessons learned that can be shared with the EU Delegation, in particular in relation to the thematics identified as priority by the EU Delegation in the pre-programming phase.

Joint programming¹: Find out whether there is a Joint Programming mission planned for your country, and/or review the Joint Programming report produced. Remember that EU Member State agencies² can also help influence and support your agenda. As part of the common response to Covid-19 joint programming is now also called **Team Europe approach**.

Key messages when participating at consultations or approaching the EU Delegation:

¹ Joint programming means that EU Member States - through their embassies or development cooperation agencies - and the EU should get together to come up with joint planning. At present, there are 79 countries where efforts towards joint programming have been undertaken and 20 countries where joint strategies exist. Contact your EU Delegation and key contacts in the national authorities, embassies or representatives of other European donor agencies (such as DANIDA, GiZ, etc) (see <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/joint-programming-tracker/>)

² Member states development agencies are legal entities to coordinate and implement the development strategy of EU member states on the ground such as AECID, GiZ, Sida, AFD etc.

- It is very important to **come prepared, with concrete/clear messages for the process**. For example, your own country/sector assessments and country strategy papers for the next few years can help you justify your positions on the programming priorities. This will help shape the EU's Team Europe initiatives identified in the pre-programming phase and contribute to the MIP in your country.
- If you have participated in the pre-programming consultations, share this experience and conclusions.
- If you are working in a restrictive country context, provide the EU Delegation with key messages on **how they could support CSOs and other democracy actors on shrinking civic space**, improve the working environment for civic actors and any key messages they could convey to the national government and other donors. It is essential to promote the role of CSOs in all aspects of the programming and implementation of EU development aid.
- **Request CSO consultation and involvement in all future geographic programmes**. The EU Delegation should consider CSOs as partners across all programmes and advocate for dedicated CSO allocations in all geographic programmes. Provide examples of civil society's role and added value across the different sectors, including technical sectors such as agriculture, energy, etc. Highlight the relevance of these sectors with the Team Europe priorities identified in the pre-programming phase, for example, education or agriculture in relation to climate action or digitalisation - see the example of how the EU priorities translate in countries in the annex at the end of this document. Give concrete and successful examples of impact of CSO actions. It is important that those consultations be organised in a transparent and inclusive manner (reaching out to as many smaller and local organisations than possible).
- Take into account that when programming the allocation of funds, EU Delegations and [MS](#) will have to foresee how the EU could better link its humanitarian, development and peacebuilding responses (the so-called "nexus approach") and define the EU's contribution through future programmes and initiatives to **human development and social inclusion, gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, climate change and migration**, across all their actions. It is therefore important to share how to best implement these in your context and country.
- **Do not meet to ask about the funding for your projects or your organisation** – this is neither the timing nor the purpose of the engagement and it may distort your key messages. This is about the long-term overarching funding strategy of the EU in your country and the funding for the CSO sector and its priorities. It is also about creating a relationship which will help in the long run.
- Promote maintaining privileged access to the dedicated CSO and Human Rights and Democracy programmes to encourage policy activity, advocacy and defence of human rights and democracy.
- **Advocate for transparency of the programming process and of the allocation of funding for all future funding modalities**, such as budget support, trust funds, direct awards, etc. For example, in case of EU budget support for the national government, request CSOs to input on the indicators and request the EU to set up transparent monitoring mechanisms which would allow CSOs to track the impact of the budget support and spending.

Don't forget that this is the phase that will determine the EU's main programmes and allocations of funds as well as modalities for the next 7 years.

CSOs are not the only actors being consulted. It is worth noting that the private sector, international financial institutions and international organisations are also consulted.

Feedback and sharing information: Please feedback on any engagement with the EU Delegation or EU Embassy (on EU programming) to CONCORD. Also, ensure you share this

information with your networks and civil society colleagues in the country. This feedback and information are crucial for CONCORD to be able to report back on the quality of the process, or on improvements to be made further and for you and colleagues to be updated about priorities and opportunities.

C- If you have any question or need further support, please contact CONCORD Secretariat:

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Annex

Translation of the EC priorities at country level example tab → [link](#)

Useful links

CONCORD Webinar on EUD engagement with Civil Society, November 2019 available in three languages:

- English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP5HunU7p2o>
- French: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53WHmlHtC7A>
- Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cUTiO3rVTM>

CONCORD (2019), *EUDs unwrapped. A practical guide for CSOs engagement with EUDs* ([link](#)) available in three languages:

- English:
<https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EUDHandbook-English-2.pdf>
- French: <https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EUDHandbook-French.pdf>
- Spanish:
<https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EUDHandbook-SPANISH.pdf>

CONCORD (2019), *Timeline of EU budget 2021-2027* ([link](#))

CONCORD (2019), *Messages on EU GAP III* ([link](#))

CONCORD (2020), *Digitalisation and NDICI Programming* ([link](#))

CONCORD (2020), *Green Deal, human development and NDICI Programming* ([link](#))



