

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

The EU is the largest global 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 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 external action financing instruments. CONCORD and its members prepared for you this **information note** on the first phase of the programming process of the “Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument” (NDICI), the new external action instrument (which replaces the EDF, the DCI, the EIDHR etc) **to ensure that CSOs are meaningfully consulted and engaged in this “pre-programming” process for the next financial period (2021-2027).**

What is pre-programming?

NDICI will now be the main EU cooperation instrument, covering most SDG areas, from climate action to human rights, health, gender equality, support to civil society, and many more.

The NDICI **pre-programming** consists of consultations and an analysis phase carried out by the EU and its Member States. It will allow the EU to identify its areas of support in, and with partner countries, which will then appear in the final planning documents such as the Multi Annual Action Plans. This phase will happen between now and mid-June. The EU Delegations have to send the outcomes of the pre-programming phase to Brussels by the 20th of April, which means that the **pre-programming consultations should happen from now until early April.**

The programming of the NDICI will take place from July until October with the consultations expected in August-September. *However this timeline might change due to different circumstances such as COVID-19.*

The new EU Budget for the 2021-2027 period

The EU has a 7 year budget cycle (also called Multiannual financial framework - MFF) and is currently being negotiated for the period 2021-2027.

The key changes and shifts in the new cycle are:

- The aim is to “uphold and promote the EU’s values and interests worldwide”
- One single external development aid instrument will cover all development cooperation assistance, called “Neighbourhood, development and International Cooperation Instrument” (NDICI). This instrument will have a strong focus on geographical programmes (country level) with almost 75% of funds, but it will also include thematic programmes (albeit reduced), rapid-response actions, as well as a reserve to be used in a more flexible manner. A much bigger share of that budget will be used to subsidise private companies to invest in partner countries, via extremely complex financial instruments.
- It needs to be aligned with the the five new priorities of the European Union:

Overarching geopolitical priorities of the European Commission

- **Green Deal:** climate change, environment, biodiversity, natural resources management, sustainable energy, food systems: from farms to forks, circular economy, green and smart cities and water and oceans.
- **Digital and data technologies:** regulatory standards, digital connectivity, digital skills and entrepreneurship and 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.

- Key targets and benchmarks: 92% of NDICI has to be ODA, with reference to 0.7% GNI and 0.2 % to LDCs; 20% benchmark on human development and social inclusion related to the whole NDICI; possibly a new primary gender target, in addition to the already existing benchmark stating that 85% of programmes should integrate gender equality as a significant objective; 25% benchmark for climate-related actions; new focus on the humanitarian/development nexus in the rapid response pillar. High possibility that the NDICI will also include a target on migration-related funding.

Pre-programming March-April 2020 - A key moment to engage with EU Delegations

CONCORD and its members are closely following and influencing the next EU budget and programming process at the Brussels and EU Member States level, including advocating for CSO participation in the processes. This advocacy will continue throughout 2020 and early 2021 and regular updates are available via [CONCORD's website](#).

EU Delegations at the country level are also involved in this process and they are the ones who will determine the large scale multi sectoral initiatives so called flagship initiatives around the new EC priorities for the next 7 years for example green growth. It is expected that the consultations on the flagship initiatives will be taking place in the next few weeks between now and 20 April when the EUDs have to report back. It will be very important for CSOs to engage proactively with EU Delegations at the country level in the coming weeks.

How to engage in the pre-programming process

- **Reach out to the EU Delegation:** Find out whether the EU Delegation in your country has planned a consultation with CSOs in the coming weeks. Contact the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation and request them to organise it.

CONCORD set up an [online monitoring tool](#) for the different consultations taking place around the World which also need your input in case the date of the consultation is not there and you already know it.

- **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.
- **Joint programming:** Find out whether there is a Joint Programming mission planned for your country. Joint programming means that EU member states through their embassies or development cooperation agencies will get together to come up with joint planning in some countries. 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/>)
- **Programming advocacy and key messages:**
 - o 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.
 - o 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.
 - o If you participate at consultations or approach the EU Delegation, it is 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 years can help you justify your positions on the programming priorities and results of which can contribute and shape the EU's flagships initiatives in your country.
 - o Request CSO consultation and involvement in all future geographical programmes. The EUD should consider CSOs as partners across all programmes and advocate for dedicated CSO allocations in all geographical programmes. Provide examples of the CSO role and added value across the different sectors, including technical sectors such as agriculture, energy, etc.
 - o Maintain privileged access to the dedicated CSO and Human Rights and democracy programmes to encourage political activity, advocacy and defence of human rights and democracy.
 - o Advocate for transparency of the programming process and allocation of funding for all future funding modalities, such as budget support, trust funds, direct awards, etc. For example, in case of the EU budget support for the national government, request CSOs to input on the indicators and request 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 first step that will contribute to determine the key priorities – more comprehensive and structured programming process will continue in the second half of 2020.

Feedback: Please feedback on any engagement with the EU Delegation or EU Embassy (on EU programming) to CONCORD or to your EU-based representation if you have one. This feedback is crucial for CONCORD to be able to report back on the quality of the process, or on improvements to be made further. Therefore, please fill in this [short evaluation form](#).

Who can help you prepare? If you have any question

If you have any questions or need support, please contact CONCORD secretariat:

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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](#))

