



Joint EU NGO statement on the rationalisation of the EC's thematic funding instruments in the field of external relations¹

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0. Introduction

NGOs hold to these main principles:

- Rationalisation of the thematic programs should lead to more efficiency and more effective delivery of aid
- Rationalisation of the thematic programs should be coherent with geographic and other programs and instruments
- Rationalisation of the thematic programs should be consistent with the new Development Policy Statement and other EU development principles
- Each thematic program should address the cross cutting issues of Gender, Children, Human Rights (including the right to food), HIV and AIDS, and Environment.

Overall, we remain broadly in support of the idea of simplifying the EC's existing thematic funding instruments in the field of external relations as long as it remains a means to promote efficiency, transparency and more effective delivery of aid.

1. Governance, programming and management

Each of the thematic programmes should be governed by a specific co-decided policy-setting regulation which cements the legal basis of the programme and outlines the governance, programming and reporting mechanisms. NGOs think that this is the only way to ensure transparency, monitoring, effective management and EP and Member-States implication.

Funds for the thematic programmes should be committed via multi-annual programming. This could be realised through the adoption by co-decision of a Multi-annual Financial Framework.

The programming process should be based on a proper assessment and on lessons learnt from past experience, and monitoring and evaluation. Learning from practice should be a

¹ This is the short summary version of the joint NGO statement, we have also made a more extensive version.

central feature of each programme with the involvement of all stakeholders including EC delegations and strategic and implementing partners.

Thematic programmes need to be programmed in a way which mutually supports each programme, incorporating the cross-cutting themes. Lessons-learnt from different programmes should be incorporated between programmes as relevant.

Across the board, we are concerned about the lack of capacity in terms of staff numbers, profile and experience within the EC to effectively deal with and benefit from the thematic programmes, both at present and in the future.

Thematic programmes should be a space for innovation, creating a catalytic effect on other aid programmes.

2. Mobilising public support

Mobilising public support for global justice, environment, human rights, peace, and development within the EU external actions is a vital and cross cutting concern for all thematic programmes. It should therefore explicitly be foreseen in all programmes.

Public awareness fosters the full participation of all citizens in world-wide poverty eradication, and the fight against exclusion. It seeks to influence more just, equal and sustainable economic, social, environmental, human rights based, national and international policies.

Public awareness is also important in partner countries, to strengthen citizens' capacities to take action, defend their rights and take part in the political debate at local, national and international levels.

3. Consultation process with CSOs in Europe and partner countries

We feel that CSO input to the debate should be of particular significance and interest to the European Institutions. It is clear that the ability of the EU to effectively play the role to which it aspires to in the world will critically depend on the support it has from Europe's own citizens.

Flawed consultation in rationalisation process: In many cases the EC has not been respecting its own minimum standards for consultation. Most problems reflect an ad hoc consultation process suffering in many cases from the absence of continuous, organized and transparent mechanisms of dialogue and of joint learning processes.

Consultation in programming process: The Commission should establish a permanent mechanism of dialogue with civil society organisations that have a strategic interest and the relevant expertise. Dialogue with CSOs taking place at Brussels level should be mirrored at field level with EC delegations and Member-State embassies.

4. Definition of actors within the thematic programmes

The EC's thematic programmes need to be implemented within the context of its international legal obligations, multilateral commitments and the activities of the international community as a whole.

Actors best placed to play a part in their implementation can be defined based on their particular strengths and specificity. In this way what we see as an increasing confusion over the role and added value of CSOs, International Organisations, private sector, local authorities etc. would be addressed.

The EC also needs to ensure it maintains and further develops its own capacity and expertise in the management of its thematic programmes. We are concerned about the fact that the EC is increasingly delegating the implementation of its budgets and policies to international organisations (such as the UN) and governmental bodies at the expense of (existing) partnerships with CSOs.

Need for EC / CSO partnership: the potential for this strategic partnership approach has never been fully utilised, as there has never been a serious debate and reflection about what both parties can achieve through such a partnership. Partnership between the EC and CSOs goes beyond mere funding, and opportunities for true policy dialogue and CSO engagement should be strengthened in the future for CSOs both in the EU and in partner countries.

5. Consistency, coherence and gaps

We are very concerned about the mismatch between policies, instruments, programmes and implementation. Policy ambitions are rarely met by appropriate programmes, budgets, or staffing.

Across the instruments we see an absence of real gender analysis and responses to equality and women's rights. Thematic programming should deliver on commitments made in the newly adopted European Consensus on Development to carry out strategic environmental and gender-equality impact assessments on a systematic basis.

The EC has not made clear how rationalisation is linked to coherence and consistency. Also, the claim that rationalisation will automatically lead to more efficiency should be analysed further.