



Civil Society Dialogue Network Discussion Paper

EU Flexible Funding for Support to Locally-led Peacebuilding Activities: Good Practices and Recommendations

Terms of Reference

Background

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition among the donor community of the need to improve support to local civil society organisations in the field of peacebuilding and international cooperation. These actors working on local level initiatives make striking, sustainable contributions both to reducing violence in the short term and to strengthening the capacity of their societies to minimise and manage conflicts in the longer term.

There have been discussions at EU level on funding local organisations, and a number of EU policy documents and evaluations have gathered some existing best practices and outlined recommendations. This includes the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) Final Sector Evaluation of IcSP support to in-country civil society actors in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis preparedness (2022), the Directorate-General for the European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)¹ report on [Enhanced Outreach to CSOs: A Collection of Good Practices of Financial Support to Third Parties in the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Countries](#) (2021) and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) guidance note on [Promoting equitable partnership with local responders in humanitarian settings](#) (2023). These documents all highlight the importance of flexible funding for local civil society organisations to be able to design and adapt projects according to changing circumstances and to better respond to local needs.

However, the external mid-term evaluation report of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe (NDICI-GE), the EU's main financing instrument for external action, notes that "the options afforded by the instruments to circumvent the heavy requirements and formal difficulties, and reach out to grass-roots CSOs, are under-used by EU Delegations."² Meanwhile, the Council Conclusions on the mid-term evaluation of the NDICI-GE urge the Commission "to address the increased complexity for local actors and civil society to participate in and have access to funding of the NDICI-Global Europe programmes."³

In May 2022, EPLO organised, in partnership with the European Commission and the European External Action Service, a Civil Society Dialogue Network Meeting with the aim of gathering input from civil society experts on EU support for local peacebuilding through the NDICI-GE Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention. This Discussion Paper will inform and

¹ This Directorate-General was divided into the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA) and the Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST) as of February 2025.

² External Mid-Term Evaluation of the NDICI-GE, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/publications-library/evaluation-european-unions-external-financing-instruments-2014-2020-and-2021-2027_en, p.30.

³ Mid-Term Evaluation of the NDICI-Global Europe external financing instrument – Council Conclusions, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11343-2024-INIT/en/pdf>, June 2024, p.5.



deepen the reflections on these issues by presenting concrete examples of EU flexible funding for locally-led peacebuilding and key recommendations for the EU.

Objectives of the discussion paper

The overall objective of the paper is to make the case for sustaining and strengthening EU flexible funding for locally-led peacebuilding activities for greater efficiency and impact. The sub-objectives are as follows:

- 1) To explore the barriers and challenges experienced by EU institutions in providing flexible funding for locally-led peacebuilding activities and the efforts made to overcome these challenges;
- 2) To highlight existing flexible funding practices used by the EU in supporting peacebuilding activities implemented by locally-led civil society organisations and their effectiveness through presenting case studies of EU-funded projects and activities;
- 3) To **provide recommendations to the EU for improving flexible funding** for locally-led peacebuilding activities, particularly under the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

Flexibility here is understood as the ability to design and adapt projects in order to best suit local needs and circumstances, ensuring funding is accessible, relevant and effective and remains so over the course of the project as any new priorities emerge.

Methodology/content

The focus will be on projects and activities implemented by locally-led civil society organisations (CSOs) that involve supporting communities affected by violent conflict (this may include communities living in situations of fragility or of ongoing violent conflict, or in post-conflict situations).

This will involve:

- First, providing a brief overview of the different approaches for funding locally-led CSOs implementing peacebuilding activities set out in the current EU rules and regulations and funding framework, with a focus on the opportunities for flexible funding.
- Presenting approx. 5 case studies of EU-funded projects implemented by local CSOs with a peacebuilding mandate as examples of good funding practices. Good funding practices could include sub-granting for locally-led peacebuilding initiatives, funding the co-creation phase of a project, and providing core/operational funding for locally-led initiatives.
- Presenting per case study:
 - o 2-3 lessons learned/good practices in EU funding for locally-led peacebuilding activities, highlighting the impact and effectiveness of the funding practices;
 - o 2-3 recommendations for the EU on improving its support to locally-led peacebuilding activities.
- Putting forward consolidated recommendations for the EU to enhance the impact and effectiveness of its funding through providing flexible support to locally-led peacebuilding activities. This may include, where relevant, recommendations on updating current EU rules and regulations to improve funding modalities for locally-led CSOs.



Deliverable and scope of work

The external consultant will carry out the research (including conducting interviews with relevant officials from HQ and EUDs and with funding recipients) for the paper on the basis of initial guidance by EPLO for the selection of the case studies.

The consultant will submit a draft for the Discussion Paper, on which EPLO will then provide feedback, before the consultant submits the final draft. EPLO reserves the right to revise the final draft.

Timeframe

Deadline for expression of interest	01.08.25
Signature of contracts and kick off meeting	Week of 11.08.25
First draft due	19.09.25
Final draft due	26.09.25

10 working days are estimated.

Format

The Discussion Paper will be written in English (British English). The Paper will have a length of approx. 10,000 words, plus an executive summary of maximum two pages in the format of the template for Discussion Papers (approx. 500-1000 words).

Required expertise and experience:

- Proven knowledge of EU funding/prior experience working on EU-funded projects
- Experience working on peacebuilding projects will be an asset
- An interest in the aid sector and localisation
- Experience conducting interviews
- Proven strong research, analytical, writing and editing skills
- Experience working with the non-profit sector
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English
- Alignment with EPLO's objectives and values
- Availability within the timeframe



Application procedure:

Qualified and interested candidates should send their financial offer and the following documents to jobs@eplo.org (subject line: Flexible Funding paper) by **1 August**:

- An up-to-date CV, including contact details of a reference
- A cover letter setting out how they will approach the research task
- Links to 2-3 recently published papers

Applications will be reviewed, and short interviews will be scheduled with short-listed candidates.

Remuneration:

10 days' work in the range of 500-700 EUR (excl. VAT) per day.