



Civil Society Dialogue Network Funding Instruments Meeting

EU support for local peacebuilding through the 'Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Crisis Preparedness' component of the NDICI-Global Europe Thematic Programme on Peace Stability and Conflict Prevention: Gathering civil society input

Thursday 12 May 2022, Online

MEETING REPORT

This Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) Funding Instruments Meeting (FIM) brought together 26 civil society representatives, officials from the European Commission (EC) and EU delegations (EUDs), and members of the evaluation team that had been commissioned to undertake an evaluation of EU support for civil society organisations (CSOs) under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP).

The overall objective of the meeting was for representatives of CSOs, the EU and other experts to (1) discuss previous and ongoing EU support for local peacebuilding actors in conflict-affected countries and regions; and (2) provide recommendations to the EU on maximising the effectiveness of EU support under the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE).

As the meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule, the views expressed may not be attributed to any participating individual or institution nor do they necessarily represent the views of all of the meeting participants, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and its member organisations, or the co-organisers.

Civil society representatives raised the following issues and questions, and made the following recommendations:

Key issues

- In general, local organisations have a better knowledge of the contexts and the needs of local populations in the places where they operate. They may also find it easier to collaborate with institutional and local stakeholders.
 - There is, however, the perception that international actors, including the EU, do not always trust local organisations.

- It is highly resource-intensive for organisations to apply for EU funding, partly due to the need to maintain regular direct contact with the EU. Given that many local organisations do not have sufficient human resources to do fundraising, many of them rely on partnerships with international non-governmental organisations (INGOs).
- It is essential that grants have an appropriate duration, and that there is continuity in funding in order to ensure that programmes are impactful and sustainable. Several participants noted that 24 months is the minimum grant duration they would recommend to ensure that project objectives can be properly implemented. Different types of projects may also require different funding durations.
 - Allowing the appropriate duration for funding enables sufficient time for processes that cannot be rushed, including developing key networks and meaningfully integrating key cross-cutting aspects of peacebuilding work (e.g. gender sensitivity and inclusion). Long-term funding enables the consolidation of gains for peace even during downturns in the conflict, thereby making engagements more sustainable.
 - Longer-term grants also allow organisations to be more proactive and prepare for future peacebuilding efforts.
 - The duration of grants has an impact on the degree of local ownership of peacebuilding projects. For small grant and/or sub-granting mechanisms to be locally-led and locally-owned, highly participative processes in the design and development phase are key. These processes, which need to involve local actors in a meaningful way, are essential to ensure that engagements are impactful. However, they are also time-consuming.
 - Continuity or lack thereof in funding has been a real challenge for many organisations. This is particularly the case for local organisations: EU grants sometimes represent over 80% of their funding.
- The possibility to sub-grant has enabled funds to reach many local organisations and groups of people that may otherwise not have been able to meet EU criteria for funding. Indeed, religious and traditional organisations, youth groups and women-led organisations and others are often organised in more informal ways but have significant impacts in their communities.
- Many organisations have welcomed the EU's flexibility in the management of funds during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, some organisations were able to negotiate a certain flexibility in how project budgets were used (e.g. re-allocating some budget lines to cover internet and videotelephony costs in order to move activities online, and negotiating budget amendments and no-cost extensions).
- INGOs are often called on to act as grant-holders and coordinators on behalf of consortia. Despite generally having larger capacities than local organisations, many INGOs have still found that managing grants places a significant strain on their resources. It is therefore a challenge when grants come with a requirement for a high percentage of the funding to be sub-granted as this limits the amount that is available for managing the sub-granting.
 - The € 60,000 cap on the amount of funding that can be sub-granted to each organisation limits the amount of meaningful exchange between INGOs and local organisations (e.g. lessons learning processes or joint events) that can be covered by the budget.
- Significant administrative requirements remain a key obstacle to local organisations that apply for and manage EU funds. Co-financing requirements can also present a barrier, particularly when different donors do not align exactly.

Questions

- How can organisations apply for funding with organisations that act as associates but do not qualify either as co-applicants or as sub-grantees?
- Does the EU collect disaggregated data on the number of local organisations that receive funding as lead or co-applicants?
- Has there been any evolution in terms of the flexibility of EU financial rules?
- Does the EU have a certain amount of funding to be allocated specifically to local actors?
- Will capacity building for future programming be required as part of future grants?

Recommendations

- The EU should explore the possibility of imposing different administrative requirements for different sizes of grants. This would enable smaller INGOs or local organisations to apply for smaller grants as lead applicants. The EU could also explore integrating criteria for the effectiveness of projects, in parallel to managerial capacities, which could also increase the possibilities for smaller organisations to access funding.
- The EU should support INGOs to build the capacities of local organisations to manage funds themselves.
- The EU should increasingly include mitigating the security risks of peacebuilding work and support for the mental health needs of peacebuilders in its budget priorities.
- The EU should simplify its budgeting processes and financial management for more programmatic adaptation (e.g. by allowing greater flexibility between budget lines) in order to enable local organisations to respond to changes in the context.
- The EU should track which organisations that receive EU funding are led by women, and which explicitly prioritise gender equality in their core mandate.
- The EU should support core costs for local organisations.
- The EU should cover costs associated with promoting meaningful collaboration between INGOs and local organisations.
- The EU should standardise procedures across different EUDs to prevent confusion. Guidelines for calls for proposals under the NDICI-GE Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention should be more specific in order to avoid duplication of activities that can be funded under other programmes.
- The EU should systematically emphasise building relationships with local actors (e.g. religious leaders, youth groups etc.), as part of its peacebuilding support.

Civil Society Dialogue Network

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The fourth phase of the CSDN will last from 2020 to 2023. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).