



Civil Society Dialogue Network Funding Instruments Meeting

Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe

Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention

Informal consultation on the Mid-term Review of the Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027

7 September 2023, Brussels & online

Meeting Summary

1. Introduction

Following opening remarks, the consultation began with panelists from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission (EC)'s Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) giving a presentation on the Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention (TP on PS&CP), including the objectives of the Mid-term Review and the state of play of the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP). This was followed by an exchange of views. Participants were then divided into small groups and provided with guiding questions aiming to assess the relevance and progress of the MIP.

Further details on the contributions from participants can be found in sections 2 and 3 of this report. It is important to note that there was no attempt to seek consensus and the content received reflects the diversity of views and expertise of the participants. There were, however, analysis and recommendations that were expressed by more than one participant and therefore worth highlighting in this introduction. For example, the importance of local knowledge and leadership and the need to strengthen support for local organisations was frequently raised. It was noted that strengthening bottom-up approaches would mean moving closer to the priorities and therefore having a stronger impact. Local partners at community level generally have much more holistic approaches because they look more closely at community needs, without thinking in silos. It was proposed that support for local organisations could be improved by a more critical consideration of the role of relevant actors, including who has access to EU funding or opportunities to engage with policymakers. Direct funding of local actors is needed and there should be a balance in funding between CSOs and INGOs.

Linked to this was the recommendation to have a more effective system of knowledge management and sharing knowledge (e.g. which actors are working on what) at country-level and across regions and topics. It was noted that there is a lot of data available, yet the same mistakes are often repeated. A rigorous feedback loop would help ensure the data is used effectively. Participants discussed innovation, raising points such as the need for agility, time and being open to failure in order to be innovative. The EU's risk appetite as a donor was raised on several occasions, including in relation to the choice of not doing something, the importance of also considering risks for NGOs, INGOs, and local communities and the difference in risk appetite between engaging in peacebuilding work and working on other issues. Other examples of areas that were considered to need strengthening included further emphasis on conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity and gender sensitivity and broadening the focus on climate change.

2. Key points raised in the small group discussions where participants responded to guiding questions to assess relevance and progress of the MIP

On the broader picture of the EU in the world:

- How can the EU contribute more effectively to peace and stabilisation?
- What lessons can be drawn from previous programming that should be taken into consideration for the next three years?
- As different geographic priorities are emerging, how can the EU ensure an effective global response?
- How can peace and security be better integrated into all EU external action programming?

Comments and Recommendations:

- Political developments can distort priorities. Resources allocated on an issue can quickly be redeployed to other contexts (e.g. Ukraine), without the root causes being properly addressed.
- Ukraine cannot be the EU's main priority as funding needs to be distributed globally. Funding for Ukraine reconstruction needs to be found elsewhere.
- Better knowledge management is important in order to understand who is doing what in which context.
- It should be possible to go on a website and see what the EU is funding under different programmes in each country.
- On lessons from previous programming, the subsidiarity principle was good, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) was complementary and priorities were drawn from previous years. It was hoped that the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) would embed peace everywhere through the MIPs. Indeed, the aspiration to mainstream peacebuilding and conflict prevention into geographic programming is welcome, but there is space for improvement. When analysing geographic MIPs, the humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) nexus does not come across strongly, meaning the idea of including peace has failed. Hence the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity need to be brought back and reinforced in the Thematic Programme.
- A positive example of integration that could be systematised was a call for proposals in the Horn of Africa which included resilient peaceful borderlands, climate change, food security, displacement with a peacebuilding lens, conflict sensitivity, peace responsiveness, and going beyond a do-no-harm approach.
- There is a lot of data available, yet the same mistakes are often repeated. There needs to be a rigorous feedback loop so data can be used effectively.
- While an increase in consultation opportunities is welcome, quality is more important than quantity. Local knowledge is crucial, so it is important that discussions such as this CSDN meeting also take place “on the ground”. It is also important that exchanges are regular and structured so that two-way discussions can take place.
- In some contexts, there is a sense that the Global North is doing the “care taking” of the Global South while not engaging in direct dialogue with it.
- There is a tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches, which translates into an imbalance between money and solutions. Strengthening bottom-up approaches would mean moving closer to the priorities and therefore having a stronger impact. Locals must contribute and lead the process. If root causes are not addressed there is a risk that conflicts will keep recurring.
- It is not possible to have localisation without flexibility and long-term funding.
- Support for local organisations could be improved by a more critical consideration of the role of relevant actors, which includes looking at who has access to EU funding or opportunities to engage with policymakers. There is a need for direct funding of local actors. Local civil society

is consulted by everyone and funded by no one. There should be a balance in funding between CSOs and INGOs.

- In general, there is a lot of gatekeeping and many intermediary organisations. Going through intermediaries may challenge the reality of local communities. In Northern Syria, only local organisations are engaging at community level, yet funding is only channelled through INGOs.
- Discussions about “innovation” are welcome, but more thinking is needed around risks, the ability to plan in an agile way and learn lessons. Given the budgetary complexity and the short-term approach, “innovation” seems rather a buzzword or a way to mask what the EU can’t actually fund. The term “innovation” is used too often to the point where it becomes unclear what it really means. How and why innovation is promoted should be better reflected on.
- Innovation requires time. There is no time to be innovative, have impact, and draw and apply lessons in an 18-month period.
- There is a contradiction in the EU affirming itself as a mediation actor while shrinking the space for mediation overall to leave more space for realpolitik. The EU should not forget that its added value is being a values-based actor and should be honest about recognising this contradiction in its approach in many contexts (including Ukraine), while leaving space for mediation and humanitarian principles.
- At a more political level, from the view of geopolitics, the role of “the West” as a mediator is fading in favour of safeguarding national interests strictly related to defence and security. This creates a vacuum that will - and is - being filled by other actors, such as China and Turkey which are taking up more space as mediators in the international landscape.
- The EU is very good at monitoring and coordinating at a high political level but gets lost in the development and “hands on” part of project implementation.
- In contexts where there is a rise of authoritarianism, the EU should reconsider its local engagement, moving away from governmental actors and towards other actors, such as local civil society, community leaders and religious figures. Engagement should not be extractive but should also include capacity building.
- As governments in various countries become more hostile, there is a greater imperative for the EU to engage with local CSOs. Consequently, dialogue with CSOs and opening up spaces should happen as much as possible, including in the funding process.
- The EU should increase its use of its capacity as a convening power to link up actors working on programming. For example, it could play some sort of brokerage service to find follow-up initiatives to be carried out by other EU services after the 18-month period of projects under the Rapid Response Programme.
- There is a lack of context-specific design in some programmes.
- There is a lack of integration on the ground, for example there is a lack of connection between the role of training missions, which should be highly pedagogical and integrated, and the reinforcement of CSOs on the ground.
- Efforts to include youth are not strong enough. They have to be accompanied by capacity building efforts so that participation can take place on an equal footing.
- Innovation should not only include tools and methodology but the themes covered as well. For example, a greater focus on neglected issues, such as trauma and psychological issues, would be welcome. In addition, more agility in funding mechanisms would allow for quicker and better integration of innovation in programming.
- Failures in programming should be exploited as a learning opportunity. Innovation also includes being open to failure. At the moment, failure means no renewal of funding. Instead of seeing errors as “failures”, the attitude should be to take “educated risks”, to “fail well”. The EU’s current approach does not encourage innovation.
- There are inconsistencies between EU and EU Member State (MS) policies and within the EU. Internal political priorities have a strong impact on foreign policy (migration, counter-terrorism, P/CVE). These tensions make it harder to understand the role of the EU as a peace actor.

- The values that the EU carries in peacebuilding and humanitarian action should be protected from the stance of some MS national interests. This is how the perception of the EU in the world would be strengthened.
- In the Sahel region, the EU is being perceived as a political actor to the point that CSOs prefer to hide EU (and French) funding to be seen as more neutral. The EU needs to be more neutral and value-oriented, which can sometimes require accepting less visibility.
- Different EU instruments are working on the same aspects of peacebuilding. More EU – EU coordination is needed. Consistency inside the EU in its global action is greatly needed.
- More emphasis on conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity and gender sensitivity are great ways to better streamline peacebuilding principles and approaches across EU foreign policy instruments.
- More concrete planning and context/conflict analysis is needed. Conflict/context analysis should be mandatory in the work of EU delegations. Local civil society should be involved in such analysis.
- Conflict analysis must be updated and acted upon, including for programming. There should be an ongoing dialogue that then enables regular updates.
- A lot of initiatives still appear like tick box exercises. Words like “gender”, “climate”, “nexus”, and more recently “localisation” are often used in very vague terms, which do not help in implementing impactful programming.
- Risk appetite should also be considered in relation to the choice of *not* doing something and should not only be related to risks for the EU, but also risks for NGOs, INGOs, and local communities.

On the relevance of the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 and its priorities:

- Are the existing priorities still relevant? Are there any areas that are not addressed in the MIP that should be included as priorities for the next three years? Are there any priorities that should be emphasised further?
- How can more synergies be created between the two areas of intervention under the MIP, namely 1) assistance for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis prevention and 2) addressing global, transregional and emerging threats?

Comments and Recommendations:

- Are we sure the priorities make sense for both the EU and its partners, and they are not a result of internal EU needs?
- A lot of weight is placed on large-scale issues like hybrid threats and counter-terrorism. This creates an inconsistency, because you cannot do peacebuilding on a small scale at the local level while maintaining a focus on large-scale issues. How does this impact the perception of the EU? What are the implications for local actors?
- Should the policy adapt slightly to be less strict about imposing EU views on local countries?
- We need to think more about the difference between peace and stabilisation and include local leadership in these discussions to be more inclusive of those affected by the policies and funds. These definitions should not be defined in offices in Brussels alone. Having these conversations at different levels is required to maximise the impact.
- From our initial analysis, there are countries where we were expecting to see more of a focus on peace and security which was not there. Leaving peace and security priorities out in some countries/regions puts more burden on the Thematic Programme and Rapid Response. As part of the Mid-term Review, we should look at how the EU has delivered on some of these priorities through the geographic pillar.

- There are many existing tools for conflict analysis, so there is not a specific need to develop new ones. The focus should rather be on being intentional about their use and working more with local actors.
- Creating more synergies with other sectors can also risk peacebuilding becoming “distorted” by focusing too much on migration or security issues. The starting point for synergies should be addressing root causes (human security, etc.). In some areas, synergies should not actually be sought after. A “pure” approach to peacebuilding is sometimes needed, especially at a time where the EU is losing its credibility as a peace actor.
- The EU seems to be particularly risk averse when doing peacebuilding, while it seems to be willing to take many more risks on other issues such as working with private contractors on Security Sector Reform (SSR) initiatives.
- The early warning system is very important and needs a more flexible budget. We are not able to guess what the world will be like in the next few years, so it is important that the budget is flexible enough to be mobilised quickly in changing contexts.
- There is a tendency of working “in boxes”, which leads to a lack of sufficient follow up on completed projects.
- At the moment there is a lot of investment in counter-terrorism (the UN have more employees working on counter-terrorism than peacebuilding). This approach should be recalibrated towards areas that are universally accepted as positive and effective, such as gender-responsive programming. Integrating these aspects in all initiatives would automatically increase the effectiveness of projects without having a big impact on budget lines. Integrating aspects such horizontal engagement, local engagement and climate security in programming also helps us increase flexibility and get around the fact that we do not know what the world will be like in the future. The UN and World Bank “Pathways for Peace” research underscores the cost-effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions: for every dollar spent, an estimated 16 dollars can be saved in post-conflict reconstruction and loss of GDP. Given current MIP budgetary allocations, 29% for peacebuilding and 69% for transregional threats, perhaps it is time for re-assessment. How can we connect them?
- The EU’s approach at both the political level and in programming reflects the fact that conflict prevention has a “junior role” when it comes to addressing global threats.
- The rotating presidency of the EU has guidelines for implementing actions on human rights, does something similar exist for actions on peace and security?
- How can we leverage peace and security to address the big issue of climate change? Climate security and environmental degradation and the risk to conflicts should be more prominent because they will keep growing in relevance.
- Often awareness about environmental degradation and natural resource issues is better done at the local level. The EU should not only address consequences but also invest in the prevention of these issues. Mainstreaming climate is very important but in general the focus should be directed at tackling the root causes and not only technical issues.
- The role of religious leaders and faith-based organisations is not mentioned other than in connection to violent extremism and counter-terrorism, although religious leaders play a huge role in the resilience of communities and conflict prevention.
- Disinformation, misinformation and hate speech on social media play a big role in undermining big picture democratic values and elections, but also enflaming ethnic tensions. They can have a concrete impact in creating harm and deaths in communities. Under global threats, the EU mostly talks about cyber-attacks, instead of focusing on the impacts on the ecology of peacebuilding. Some local partners are actually ahead of the curve on this topic compared to the EU.
- Action against cyber misinformation, but also misinformation in general, is under-resourced.
- In relation to modalities of delivery, there is a lot of discussion on the “what” and less on the “how”. Local partners at community level generally have much more holistic approaches

because they look more closely at community needs, without thinking in silos. In general, this clashes with the EU's approach.

- Documents should be provided more often in local languages to better include local partners.
- It is important to look more at the root causes of why people are attracted to extremist groups (corruption, livelihood opportunities, etc.) and have a better understanding of the context. Sometimes engagement with local government can actually contribute to these root causes, especially in authoritarian states.
- Current priorities do not address the relevance of corruption and the relationship between conflict and corruption.

On the Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability & Conflict Prevention (TP on PS&CP) and the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE):

- How can the TP on PS&CP be better leveraged within the NDICI-GE to ensure its highest possible added value?
- What does the TP on PS&CP add to EU foreign policy?

Comments and Recommendations:

- This is a good area for the EU to demonstrate its value at a global level, in a context where MS have cut funding for mediation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Having this component in its funding instruments is already an added value in EU external action, but it also leads to a contradiction within the EU's approach in some contexts, such as Ukraine. A strong conflict prevention component is important for soft power.
- There should be stronger synergies between humanitarian action, development and peacebuilding in the framework of the triple nexus.
- The impact and relevance of climate change should be included in an intersectional, humanitarian and, in general, wider way.
- There should be more discussions on how to change the rules to make funding more agile. For example, in the democracy support sphere, channelling funding via another entity such as the European Endowment for Democracy has allowed small organisations to navigate and access EU funding. Alternatively, if it is not possible to adapt the system, there should be more discussion on sharing knowledge to help people navigate it.
- Strengthening gender indicators would give more credibility to the EU's role.
- There should be more thinking about the different peacebuilding tools and how they can be applied in other parts of NDICI-GE, as well as learnings from peacebuilding organisations that can be applied elsewhere.
- The EU has a special place in foreign policy and it needs to reflect on what it can bring that other actors cannot. In some areas, the EU can be perceived as more distant than MS, but in others it could have an added value. There should be more reflection on the advantages and limitations of engaging as the EU, especially in contexts where Russia and China are engaging with different ways of working.
- More attention should be placed on Southeast Asia.
- The EU could be humbler on the international stage, focusing more on using its values and principles across the board.
- The line should be drawn to protect human rights and rule of law from the securitisation and militarisation of peace, stability and conflict prevention.
- The EU has limited capacity, especially at delegation level. For this, intentional and strategic prioritisation is important. Peacebuilding should be the entry point and lens through which other interventions are formulated.

- Overly stringent accounting rules might undermine effectiveness, leading to the “risk of doing the wrong thing perfectly”. Flexibility in programming should be strongly encouraged to improve effectiveness and responsiveness. There are examples of evaluations on civil society that show that effectiveness is greatly hindered by accounting perfection. The EU should consider ways of changing the relevant regulation to allow for more flexibility in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This is also in light of the different accounting rules demanded in this sector compared to other areas, such as arms procurement.
- Peace and security have a large role in the Thematic Programme and in the Rapid Response Mechanism. However, there is a greater need for it to be featured in the geographic pillars, especially because the geographic pillars might often fit better and adapt to changing situations on the ground.
- The EU should focus more internally on what goes well in terms of programming, and learn from and build on those examples instead of focusing on what goes wrong.
- The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) could be another interesting source of funding for peacebuilding work, but it is now exclusively focused on P/CVE.
- There should be a more effective system of knowledge management and sharing knowledge (e.g., who is working on what) at country-level and across regions and topics, which would encourage exchange and partnerships.

3. Exchange of views on the Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027, including state of play and broader context

	Question/comment	Response
1.	Given geopolitical changes, would you consider more recognition for the different approaches to peacebuilding and stabilisation work? We recognise that synergies are important, but we are concerned about the conflation of peacebuilding and stabilisation.	According to the EU definition, stabilisation aims at providing immediate support to rebuild trust in a political process and reinstate the social contract amidst conflict or in the aftermath of a recent conflict, paving the way for peacebuilding. The conflation is problematic if the definition of stabilisation is limited to hard security. This is not at all what the new EU concept stands for. On the contrary, the EU definition of stabilisation focuses on human security and reinforces the civilian aspects.
2.	How can we make sure that the values that underpin development policy do not get undermined in the conversion between development policies and foreign policy, when foreign policy is increasingly securitised? How can we balance the tension of being realistic while upholding the underpinning value of the NDICI-GE?	It is an obligation to respect fundamental rights in the treaties. There is a rights-based approach to development cooperation with a whole toolbox. The Strategic Compass mentions respect for fundamental rights and values, and actions are also aimed at protecting and promoting these values. There are several ways to address the situation when policies or actions are seen as infringing on fundamental rights, including mechanisms to try to address this gap and there are policies in development. Things are not always ideal, but we have to strive to be better at implementing and upholding these values. Conflict sensitivity of our actions is also ensured through the conflict analysis conducted, covering more than 60 fragile contexts.
3.	In a global environment that is evolving quickly with hard security being considered as a response much more openly, what will be done in funding instruments to protect peacebuilding, mediation and the role of civil society? Are there any measures or mechanisms in place to protect that space?	The Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy in the NDICI-GE is dedicated to civil society actors, including those working in conflict areas and those at risk. When it comes to protecting the space for CSOs in peace and security, it is more or less a given since these funds are not competing with funds used for hard security. In the Thematic Programme, there is a clear boundary with, for example, the European Peace Facility (EPF) which is off-budget. It is therefore not competing with resources for CSOs from NDICI-GE peace actions.
4.	In countries where there are Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs), it appears that the EU's policy has been to withdraw and disengage. Should we not be looking in an innovative way at what can be done instead of what cannot be done?	The EU had deployed missions to some countries which is now being called into question, so a strategic assessment is taking place. However, the partnership with African countries and the African Union is key to try to address this situation adequately. There are ongoing discussions with Member States on how to remain engaged in politically estranged contexts. In terms of focusing on what can be done, the EU needs to pursue its objectives to reinforce prevention. There is still a reinforcement of EU action in the Gulf of Guinea and partnerships in Africa at a continent level, including

		in the area of security and defence. All this is being reevaluated.
5.	What does 'innovation' mean and has there been an internal reflection on this? There is a lot of good work by people on the ground and we do not need to reinvent the wheel. What we need is to do better and be more strategic and intentional.	'Innovation' is not meant to be a new key word, but more of a critical reflection of ourselves, identifying lessons, ensuring that the learning is integrated in our actions and improving our practice. Given that we have limited resources, the question is how to best use them.
6.	How are the gender markers used by the EU in relation to conflict prevention and women in peace and security used to track the EU's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and gender equality commitments in conflict-affected settings?	We have the Gender Action Plan III where we use gender markers. A big element of this is the WPS Agenda and we - as FPI - report systematically on that. We want to see an evolution. We make sure that all questions on gender markers are addressed when selecting projects.
7.	What is the average length of a project, how is that determined and what might prompt having a longer-term horizon for a programme?	It depends on our aims. In the Thematic Programmes, there is the responsibility to think longer-term. They aim to go further and use the possibility to be global, analyse, look at impact and adjust. We want to be innovative because we have limited funding and want to see what makes a difference. We want to see how this can be replicated for crisis response but also what to do longer-term in countries with geographical programming.
8.	On early warning and monitoring, what strategy is used to make sense of the large quantity of data so that it can inform decision-making, particularly when there are unexpected events such as a coup or outbreak of conflict?	<p>The EU has its own early warning system. The goal is to have better analysis in countries to be able to adapt and work depending on what is relevant in the country. It is quite a sophisticated system which involves gathering quantitative data, complementing it with qualitative data, and selecting countries year after year - the country analysis screening - to be able to have a set of tools.</p> <p>Certain contexts are very volatile and require a more dynamic response, so we are working on a new methodology called 'stabilisation assessments.' This builds on existing conflict analysis and seeks to have a Team Europe approach and joint vision to address crises.</p>
9.	Has the geographic and thematic allocation of funding been impacted by the EU's support to Ukraine?	The objective of the thematic programme is to mainly focus on initiatives with a global and transregional dimension and continue allocating funding where it is needed. We do not think there has been an impact on funding for thematic programmes. The mid-term review for geographic funding looks at this to make sure that other regions are not impacted.
10.	Given the number of weapons provided to Ukraine, what considerations are being made for eventual Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)?	This question can be best answered by colleagues working on Ukraine and falls outside the remit of the Mid-term review of the Thematic Programme.

11.	There are not many references to local governments and leaders in the MIP.	Specific reference is made on page 6 and under priority 1 and 3 of the MIP.
12.	How does the EU ensure effective inclusion that does not impose the EU's vision for peacebuilding on local communities and how can the interests and visions of local communities be better integrated into policies and programming?	<p>We need a sense of how communities perceive EU peace and security support. It is essential to look at real time data, perception surveys for analysis and feed them back into programming, which is part of an innovative way of looking at things if done systematically.</p> <p>When we talk about human security, we have to go to the level of the communities and their vision of what security means. However, there is a physical security aspect as well that cannot be ignored, as well as the social-economic and human rights dimension and freedom from fear. This is in our new way of looking at the stabilisation concept and trying to make it more operational.</p>
13.	How can we ensure cooperation between EU, Member States and different partners to provide better value?	<p>Coordination with Member States is key for us. We are trying to put ways to link different processes in place.</p> <p>One way of aligning Member States and EU institutions in having a joint approach to crises is the preparation of conflict analysis which, in principle, feeds into the Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA). This is usually an inclusive process where we have an in-country meeting with all stakeholders and civil society. Then all the Member States also have to discuss this issue.</p>
14.	On complementarity and the integrated approach, it seems that there are in-house efforts to coordinate with other parts within the EU. How do we as CSOs have more visibility of what this actually looks like so that we can contribute as a partner in this integrated approach?	We advise you to be in direct contact with colleagues in the field where the implementation takes place. Ensure you get information from EU delegations and use your expertise.

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](#).