



CSDN POLICY MEETING

Conflict prevention, peacebuilding
and crisis response in the next
Multiannual Financial Framework

Background Paper

April 2026

European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is the largest independent civil society platform of European NGOs, NGO networks and think tanks that are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict. EPLO's mission is to connect European policymakers with civil society to develop the EU's role in securing peace, resolving and preventing conflict through nonviolent means in all regions of the world, and to do so more effectively.

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■ Objective

The objective of this background paper is to provide a brief background on the EU's funding of conflict prevention and peacebuilding under the current Multiannual Financial Framework and the proposal of the European Commission concerning the next long-term EU budget after 2027. It has been prepared in advance of the CSDN Policy Meeting due to be held in Brussels on the 21 of April 2026.

The aim of the meeting is to enable a roundtable discussion between representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), EU services and EU co-legislators on the EU's next long-term budget for external action and how it can best address drivers of conflict and fragility through conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis response. By drawing on concrete examples and operational insights from civil society experts and practitioners working in conflict-affected settings, the meeting seeks to inform reflections among policymakers shaping the EU's future financial architecture for external action.

■ The Multiannual Financial Framework

The **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** is the European Union's long-term budget, typically set for a seven-year period. It establishes the maximum amount of money the EU can spend in various policy areas during that time. The MFF ensures financial stability and predictability, allowing the EU to plan and implement policies over the long term. The Commission issued a proposed Multiannual Financial Framework in July 2026 for the period 2028-2034, alongside proposed sectoral regulations (including Global Europe) and a proposed Performance Framework. Since the proposal of the Commission, Member States have started to discuss their position, with a first compromise presented under the Danish Presidency of the Council in December 2025. The European Parliament has also started to discuss its position on the MFF, Global Europe and the Performance Framework.

Multiannual Financial Framework 2021 - 2027¹

Under the 2021-2027 MFF, several instruments are used to fund the implementation of EU's external action. The **Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation– Global Europe** (NDICI-GE) instrument (€79.462 billion) co-exists with the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) (€1.162 billion) eligible to Pre-Accession countries and the HUMA budget line for humanitarian assistance, replenished through the Emergency Aid Reserve mechanism. **Conflict prevention and peacebuilding (CP-PB) is funded through NDICI-GE.**

■ General architecture of NDICI-GE

The total budget allocated to the NDICI-GE for this period (2021-2027) is approximately **€79.5 billion**. This funding is divided into three pillars and a cushion which can be used to top up the other pillars in accordance with need:

1. **Geographic Programmes** (~€60.4 billion): Covers four sub-regions: sub-Saharan Africa, Neighbourhood, Asia & Pacific, Americas & Caribbean.
2. **Thematic Programmes** (~€6.4 billion): Addresses global issues including Human Rights and Democracy; Civil Society Organisations; Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention; Global Challenges.
3. **Rapid Response Actions** (~€3.2 billion): Provides flexibility for crisis response, conflict prevention, and addressing instability.

PLUS: Emerging Challenges and Priorities Cushion (~€9.5 billion): Allows the EU to address unforeseen global challenges and emerging needs.

Peace and security can be addressed under all pillars of the NDICI-GE and the cushion.

■ Geographic Programmes and peace programming

The Geographic Programmes address root causes of insecurity such as social cohesion, gender discrimination, lack of basic services, etc. and are used to build the resilience of states, communities, and individuals at local, national and regional levels.

Peace, stability and conflict prevention is listed as an area of cooperation under the Geographic Programme of the NDICI. In practice, according to independent researchers,

¹ European Parliament (2025) *Multiannual financial framework*, Fact Sheets on the European Union.

little geographic programming has been undertaken on peacebuilding and conflict prevention under the current MFF²

■ Thematic Programmes and peace programming

The thematic pillars of the instrument are programmable. Two thematic programmes have been funding conflict prevention and peacebuilding work: most significantly, the thematic programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention, and, indirectly, the thematic programme on Civil Society Organisations.

The total financial envelope for the Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention for the period 2021-2027 is **€871 million**. It targets actions which have a specific added value in being carried out at global or trans-regional level. Actions may be carried out independent of the consent of partner countries' governments. It is divided into two main priority areas: **Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Crisis Preparedness** which accounts for 29% of the financial envelope and is overseen by FPI.2, and **Global, Transregional and Emerging threats**, managed by FPI.1 and making up 69% of the envelope.

The total financial envelope for the Thematic Programme on Civil Society Organisations is **€1,362 billion**. It seeks to build inclusive, participatory, empowered and independent civil society and democratic space in partner countries; inclusive and open dialogue with and between civil society actors; and awareness, understanding, knowledge and engagement of European citizens regarding development issues.

■ Rapid Response and peace programming

Rapid Response actions are mobilised to contribute to “peace, stability and conflict prevention in situations of urgency, emerging crisis, crisis and postcrisis” and aim to link humanitarian aid, development actions and peacebuilding.³ Rapid response actions are not programmable.

² Watson, A. & Friedrich, J. (2024) A Growing Gap, EU Peace and Security Funding Beyond Ukraine, Policy Brief, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), p.10.

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument — Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe), OJ L 209, 14.6.2021.

■ Emerging Challenges and Priorities Cushion

The Emerging Challenges and Priorities Cushion consists of unallocated funds which can top up any of the three pillars in case of unforeseen circumstances, new needs, emerging challenges or new priorities. According to independent researchers and the mid-term evaluation, the cushion was significantly depleted already mid-way through the financing period after allocations to Ukraine, Lebanon, and other neighbourhood contexts were made, leaving limited space for addressing protracted crises or seizing peacebuilding windows of opportunity.⁴

■ Do-no-harm: the conflict sensitivity requirement

NDICI-GE includes a conflict-sensitivity requirement outlined in Article 8 (General principles) for all programmes and actions under the Instrument and in Article 12 (General programming approach) for partner countries and regions in situations of crisis, post-crisis or fragility and vulnerability. Following the adoption of the Regulation, the EU developed the conflict analysis screening (CAS) tool to inform conflict-sensitive programming under the NDICI-GE and to identify conflict prevention and peacebuilding actions in the countries where the CAS are carried out. The CAS process was adapted from the process outlined in the 2020 guidance note, following the same principles and including a conflict-sensitivity risk component focused on annual or multi-annual programming priorities.

The Proposed Multiannual Financial Framework 2028 - 2034⁵

Under heading 4 of the post-2027 MFF, the Commission has proposed to allocate 200 billion to an instrument merging development and international cooperation with accession funding and humanitarian assistance, the Global Europe Regulation. In its proposal, the Commission has increased budgetary flexibility, strengthened the ‘geographisation’ approach, and placed greater emphasis on the pursuit of EU interests in external action. It has also included remaining engaged in fragile contexts as a general principle of the regulation. The proposal would change the scope of the conflict sensitivity requirement.

⁴ Bergmann, J, & Watson, (2025). Time to strengthen the EU’s engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states. Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi).

⁵

■ A significant budget increase for external action

The **proposed budget increase for external action is ambitious in the current budgetary context, yet relative once factoring in inflation.**⁶ Observers anticipate that negotiations will lead to a lower amount, with some stakeholders calling for the amount⁷ to continue representing 10% of the total MFF ceiling (total EU budget).⁸

■ The merging of external action instruments

The **new Global Europe regulation would merge the NDICI-GE, IPA III and HUMA instruments.** Humanitarian operations would still continue to be implemented in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96. Some stakeholders are still pursuing a separate funding instrument for humanitarian action in Council and Parliament.⁹

The proposed new instrument is built around the following structure:

- **5 Geographic Pillars:** Europe, MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Pacific, Americas and the Caribbean.
- **A Global Pillar.**
- **A cushion for emerging challenges** and priorities.

Rapid-response would no longer stand as a dedicated pillar as under the NDICI-GE but would be streamlined in Geographic Pillars through non-programmable funding, for which other actions would be eligible (including competitiveness, macro-financial assistance and humanitarian assistance).

Loans and guarantees to Ukraine would be channelled through the Global Europe instrument but over-and-above the MFF ceiling.

⁶ Jones, A. (2025) A companion guide to the Global Europe instrument proposal, Policy Brief, ECDPM.

⁷ Gavas, M. & Granito, L. (2026) The Battle of the EU's Next External Action Budget, Blog post, Centre for Global Development (CGD).

⁸ European Parliament, Committee on Budgets (2025) Draft interim report on the proposal for a Council regulation laying down the Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2028–2034, 27 November 2025, co-rapporteurs: Siegfried Mureşan and Carla Tavares.

⁹ EPLO (2026) interviews with Member States, February 2026.

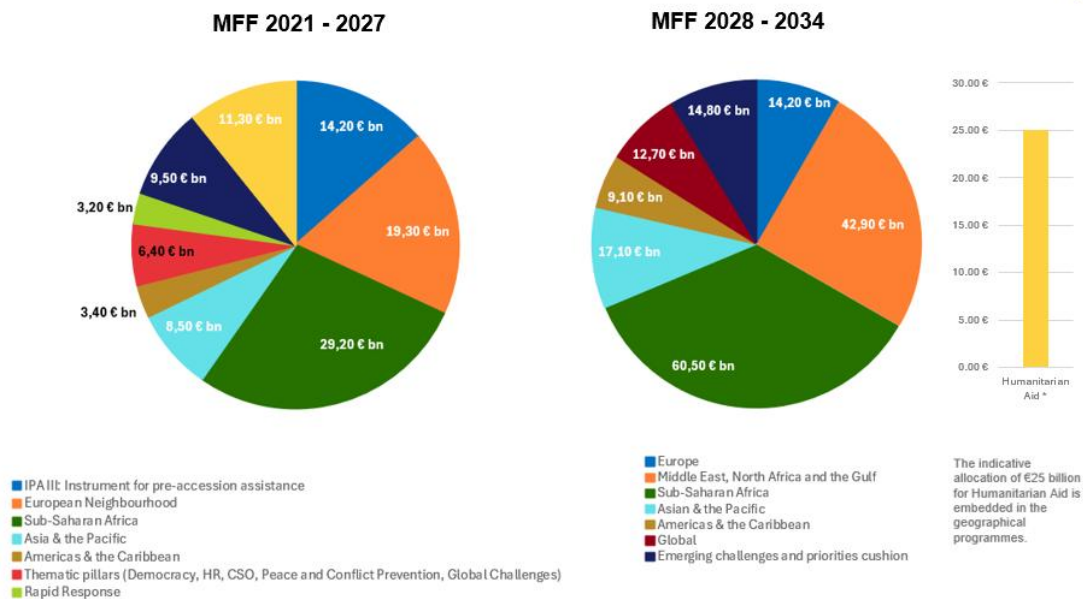


Figure. Distribution of the external action funds across identified actions: a comparison between the 2021 – 2027 MFF and the future 2028 – 2034 MFF (ODI Global, 2025)¹⁰

Budgetary flexibility

The Commission proposes **indicative amounts** for the Geographic and Global Pillars. The Commission does not propose amounts at the level of “Objectives” which would correspond, in the case of global/thematic funding, to the Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention. The draft interim report of the European Parliament on the MFF has proposed **a more granular nomenclature**, detailing budget lines that reflect specific objectives. This nomenclature would earmark funding for specific objectives.¹¹

The Commission also proposes to make **budgetary transfers** between and within pillars easier. Only transfers between pillars exceeding 10% of the annual appropriations would require the approval of the budgetary authority.¹²

The Commission does not propose **minimum thematic spending targets** in the Global Europe regulation aside from a target on DAC-ability at 90% (a decrease from 93% in the

¹⁰ Craviotto, N. (2025) The EU’s new global Europe pillar: key priorities to watch, Expert Comment, ODI Global.

¹¹ European Parliament, Committee on Budgets (2025) Draft interim report on the proposal for a Council regulation laying down the Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2028–2034, 27 November 2025, co-rapporteurs: Siegfried Mureşan and Carla Tavares.

¹² European Parliament, Committee on Budgets (2026) Draft budgetary assessment for the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Development on the proposal for a Regulation establishing Global Europe for the period 2028–2034, 26 March 2026, rapporteur: Rasmus Andresen.

current NDICI), which would be possible to amend through a delegated act.¹³ In the proposed [Performance Framework](#), an instrument which complements all sectoral regulation to conduct performance-based monitoring of the EU's budget, only one target would be applicable to external action, the **climate and environment target** set at 30%.¹⁴ EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jozef Síkela mentioned in a public exchange with MEPs that **Gender Action external action targets** would be included in the MFF following the adoption of the Gender Action Plan IV. Other targets have been put forward by various stakeholders, including targets on **Human Development** (20% of ODA) and a target for **Least Developed Countries** (0.20% of GNI).

No ratio has been set for programmable vs non-programmable funding.

The **mid-term review** of external action instruments has been replaced by a **Steering Mechanism**.

■ Geographisation

The Commission has proposed to **further develop the principle of a geographic approach** to the EU external action budget and downstream programming. The central role of the Geographic Pillar would be further increased in the EU's external action funding, with thematic funding focusing on truly global actions under a Global Pillar. Allocations to the Geographic Pillars would amount to €172.8 billion euros in total.

Peacebuilding and conflict prevention are included in each Geographic Pillar, usually under the peace and resilience objectives.

Still, the Commission proposes to maintain some thematic funding through the Global Pillar, with an indicative allocation of €12.6 billion. This Pillar would contain 5 objectives, including an objective on peace and resilience. NDICI-GE contained 4 Thematic Programmes.

¹³ Delegated acts can be adopted by the European Commission without the consent of the European Parliament and the Council.

¹⁴ In the previous MFF, the NDICI-GE included a 30% climate-target and a 10% biodiversity-target.

NDICI-GE Thematic Programmes	Global Pillar objectives in Global Europe
€ 6.40 billion	€ 12.70 billion
Human Rights and Democracy	Supporting human development
Civil Society Organisations	Advancing a just green and digital transition for sustainable prosperity
Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention;	Promoting and protecting democracy, human rights and rule of law
Global Challenges.	Contributing to peace, security, stability and response to crises
	Strengthening partnerships and strategic relations

The **scope of CP-PB activities** referred to in the Geographic and the Global Pillar is reduced compared to the scope referred to under NDICI-GE.¹⁵

The Global Europe proposal does not contain a stand-alone global/thematic funding stream dedicated to **supporting CSOs**, unlike the current NDICI-GE instrument. Some specific sub-objectives on civil society support are contained in other Global Pillar objectives (“strengthening partnerships” and “democracy, human rights and the rule of law”) and Geographic Pillars containing civil society support.

¹⁵ EPLO (2025) EPLO Brief accompanying the EPLO statement on Global Europe, September 2025, pp.6-7.

■ Greater attention to the EU's interests

The Commission has proposed to increase the following elements:

- **The focus on the EU's neighbourhood.** With conflicts rising in its neighbourhood, the Commission has proposed a more significant relative increase for MENA and Europe than other regions (taking into account the merging of IPA).
- **Win-win partnerships with third countries.** This notably presumes greater cooperation on migration (with a negative incentive through a possibility to suspend funding if a third country does not cooperate with EU return policies).
- **An added value for the European private sector.** The European Commission proposes to reflect the Global Gateway Strategy in the Global Europe regulation. The Global Gateway Strategy focuses on public-private partnerships, infrastructure projects and countering the influence of other international actors. Competitiveness actions would notably be eligible for the EU's non-programmable funding.

■ Addressing fragility as a general principle

The Commission proposes to include in the General Principles of the Global Europe regulation that **the EU should remain engaged in extremely fragile contexts**, with references to a differentiated approach for such contexts. Some stakeholders have noted that extreme fragility may be too restricted for this approach, as **highly fragile contexts** also have very specific needs.¹⁶ In its first report on the Global Gateway Strategy adopted in March 2026, the European Parliament has called for the **differentiated approach** to involve **grant-based funding**.¹⁷

■ A reduced scope for the conflict sensitivity requirement

The proposed Global Europe regulation only refers to conflict-sensitivity as concerning **actions related to crisis, peace and foreign policy needs**. In its negotiating box adopted in December 2025, the Council widened the scope to **all crisis and post-crisis settings**. Recommendations to keep the scope of the NDICI-GE conflict-sensitivity requirement (**all actions**) have been made through the 2025 OECD-DAC Peer Review of the EU.¹⁸

¹⁶ Cox, T., Reines-Djivanides, S. & Groenewald, M. (2026) Joint Call: Ensuring that the Global Europe Regulation strengthens the EU's ability to address fragility, 27 March 2026.

¹⁷ European Parliament (2026) Report on Global Gateway – past impacts and future orientation, 26 March 2026.

¹⁸ OECD (2025) Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: European Union 2025 (OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, 19 December 2025, p.74.